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Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus

A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism, Part III

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The literary study of the four events of the Illusion of the Pairs, the Descent from Trāyastriṁśa, the Taming of the Mad Elephant and the Gift of Honey by the Monkey in the life of Śākyamuni Buddha and the sites associated with them is much more complicated than that of the Birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon and *Parinirvāṇa*. These four events, belonging to the period of Śākyamuni's ministry, are invariably known by some term such as 'secondary events' in that they are not part of the group of four permitted devotion by Śākyamuni in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (see Part I in *Orientations*, November 1985, pp. 46-61). Yet, there is no question but that all of the sites involved are legitimate early sites and three of them, Rājagṛha, Vaiśali and Śrāvasti, play enormously important roles in the life of the Buddha as where the majority of *sūtras* were taught. Because of this fact, they are, at the least, equal in importance to the sites of the 'primary events', especially for the subsequent developments of the Buddhist religion. Regrettably, none of the sites of the four 'secondary events' has been accorded the same archaeological attention as that of the four 'primary events'. The actual physical locations of the events are not specifically known and, indeed, for one event, the Gift of Honey by the Monkey, there is only one reference to its having taken place at Vaiśali; other descriptions of the event do not mention a site.

The major unresolved issue is, why were these four events selected from many others in the Buddha's life to be given such prominence? There are literally thousands of narratives of individual events from the period of Śākyamuni's enlightenment to his *parinirvāṇa*. Some of them are apparently much more potent in terms of demonstrating the Buddha's religiosity than these, especially the Gift of Honey and the Taming of the Elephant. What force of intuition, didacticism or soteriological methodology binds these events together into what became one of the major themes in Buddhist art from the fourth to the twelfth century in central and eastern India, the very heartland of Buddhism and the region in which the events occurred? Whatever the reasons, along with the four 'primary events', the four 'secondary events' came to epitomize the life of the Buddha as a paradigm for the lives of all future Buddhas (see last part of this article).

Śrāvasti and Jeta's Grove (Jetavana) Monastery

[Because one of his disciples rose in the air to obtain a particularly fine begging bowl, the Buddha issued a precept against the performance of miracles. Assuming they would not be tested because the Buddha had forbidden the practice among his disciples, a group of six heretics insisted that they would perform miracles (in competition) only with him.] King Bimbisāra heard their talk, and went to the Teacher, and said, 'Revered Sir, is the report true that you have forbidden your disciples to perform miracles?' 'Yes, great king.' 'The heretics are saying, "We will perform miracles with you;" what do you intend to do about this?' 'If they perform miracles, I will do the same.' 'Have you not laid down a precept forbidding the performance of miracles?' 'Great king, I have not laid down a precept for myself; the precept was intended only for my disciples.'

(Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends* [*Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*], vol. 3, p. 39)

With these words, Śākyamuni Buddha agreed to a traditional 'conjurer's contest' to demonstrate the validity of his religion over that taught by the 'heretics' (in a Buddhist context, anyone who is non-Buddhist). Traditionally, and throughout the history of Asian religions, royal or imperial patronage was all too often decided not by the subtleties of philosophy but by the superior demonstration of [illegible] normal powers. Whether the sun was stopped in its course in the sky by the great saint pointing at it and commanding it to stop because he could not pay his wine bill and wished the king to excuse him from it, or, as in the Illusion of the Pairs, the Buddha multiplied himself into many counterparts of himself, there was always both a didactic aspect intended to educate [illegible]

tion of control over the metaphysical intended to win over the less easily educable.

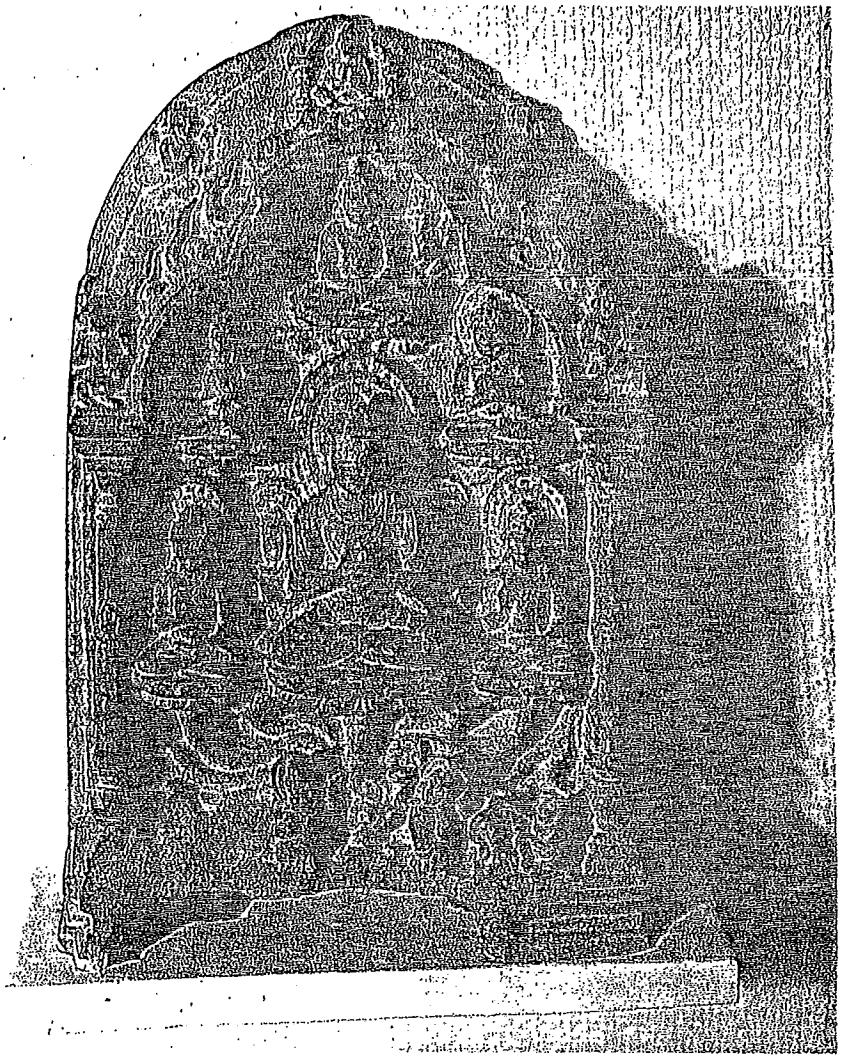
Known in literature either as the *Mahāprātihārya* ('Great Illusion' or 'Miracle') and the *Yamakaprātihārya* ('Pair Illusion' or 'Miracle'), there are both differing versions of the narrative and disagreement between the narratives as to exactly where the event took place.

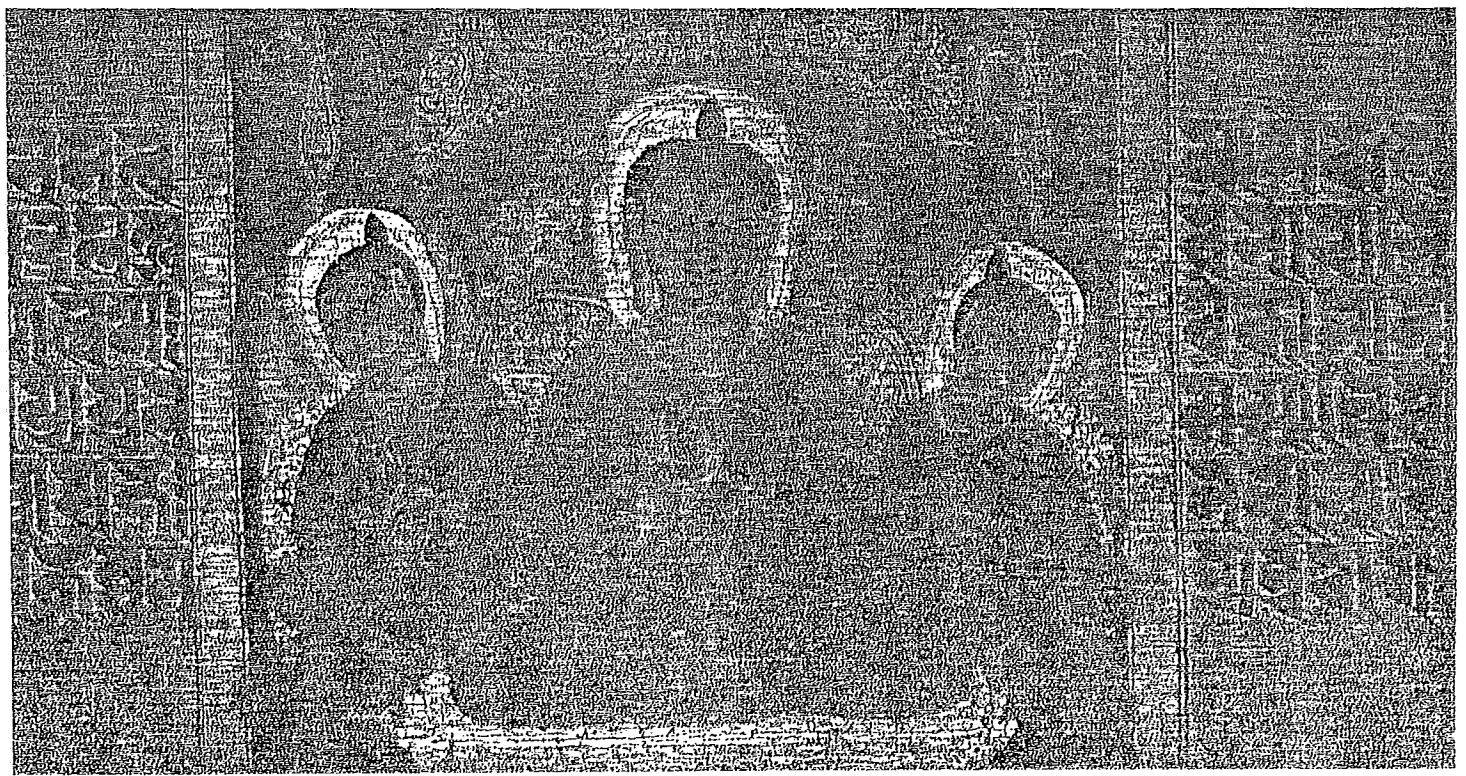
According to the *Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*, the Buddha promised King Bimbisāra of Rājagṛha in Magadha (or, according to the *Divyāvadāna*, Prasenajit of Kosala whose capital was Śrāvasti) to perform a miracle under a mango tree outside the gates of the city of Śrāvasti (between the town and the Jetavana monastery in the *Divyāvadāna*). The Buddha, arriving there the day before, discovered that the mango trees had all been cut down. Being offered a mango by the gardener Gaṇḍa, Śākyamuni ate it and ordered Ānanda to have the gardener plant the seed, which upon being planted instantly split and developed into a fully grown, mature tree, heavily laden with fruit. During the evening, Indra (Sakka), caused discomfort to the heretics (or built a pavilion for the Buddha's miracle, according to *Jātaka* story number 483). [In the morning] the Buddha caused a jewelled walk to appear extending from the eastern to the western rims of the world. In the evening, he emerged from the Gandhakuṭī (Fragrant Hall) [where he had been waiting for the appropriate time] and descended the jewelled walk into the midst of a vast assembly and performed the 'Pair Illusion'. From the upper part of his body there emitted flames, while from the lower part there emitted water and he alternated this from all sides. At times he walked up and down (while doing this) and a counterpart stood or sat or lay down. On that day, as he performed the Illusion, he taught the *Dharma* to the multitude. Seeing that none in the multitude was capable of questioning him, his double asked him questions. According to the *Divyāvadāna*, after

(Fig. 1) Śākyamuni demonstrating the 'Illusion of the Pair'
From Paitava, ancient Kapiśa, Afghanistan, c. late 3rd-early 4th century
Kabul Museum

(Fig. 2) Miniature meditational sculpture depicting Śākyamuni demonstrating the 'Great Illusion'
From Nālandā, *c.* 10th century
Nālandā Museum

(Fig. 3) Illustration from an *Aṣṭasahāsrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript depicting Śākyamuni demonstrating the 'Great Illusion'
1165 (year 4 of Govindapāla)
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Vārānasi



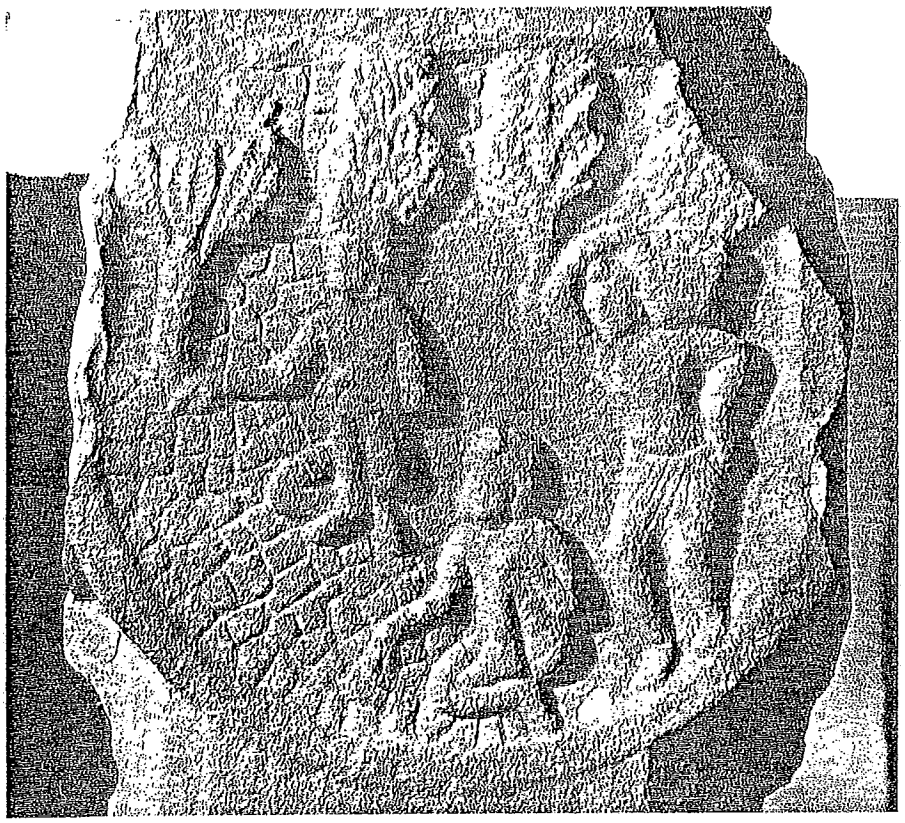


he had performed the 'Pair Illusion', he then performed the 'Great Illusion' in which a lotus rose from the ground upon which the Buddha sat and multiplied himself endlessly with all counterparts actively preaching the *Dharma*.

As is obvious from the above, the differences in relating the events are a matter of emphasis and not of substance. In the *Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*, it is the rising in the air and the emitting of flames and water that are emphasized while the production of the counterparts is kept ancillary to the teaching that followed. In the *Divyāvadāna*, the multiplication is a separate event and is emphasized in that it fills the sky with Buddhas. In early literature, there seems to have been an emphasis on the Illusion of the Pairs performance and not the Great Illusion because it occurs in several occasions in Pāli literature not as the Miracle at Śrāvasti but at different times and locations following some sermon or other event. One concludes from this that the primary event, which would then have been replicated in subsequent literature, was only the *Yamakaprātihārya* and that either the multiplication of the counterparts was a minor aspect that became emphasized or that it was actually added at some later date during the editing of the texts. Only a thorough text analysis can determine this, and it has yet to be done.

There are two major forms of representation of the Illusion of the Pairs and of the Great Illusion. The first, found only in Gandhāra (in present-day Pakistan) and in neighbouring Kapiśa (in present-day Afghanistan), shows a Buddha rising in the air and emitting water from his feet and flames (or radiance, *prabhā*) from his shoulders (Fig. 1). This convention seems not to have had wide popularity. Even in the Bactro-Gandhāran school, it survives in less than ten stone images while its existence in the rest of the Indian subcontinent is unverified. Interestingly, the second type, that of the multiplication of Buddhas (Fig. 2) is found widely throughout India from the Ajaṇṭā caves to eastern India and seems to have been very popular, with ultimately (by no later than the fifth century) one of the *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya* (eight great events in the life of Buddha) conventions being based on it.

(Fig. 4) Śākyamuni demonstrating the 'Great Illusion'
From antechamber of Cave 6, Ajaṇṭā, 470-80



(Fig. 5, *top*) Railing pillar relief depicting the spreading of coins over the Jetavana
From Bodhgayā, *c.* 120-100 BC
Bodhgayā Museum

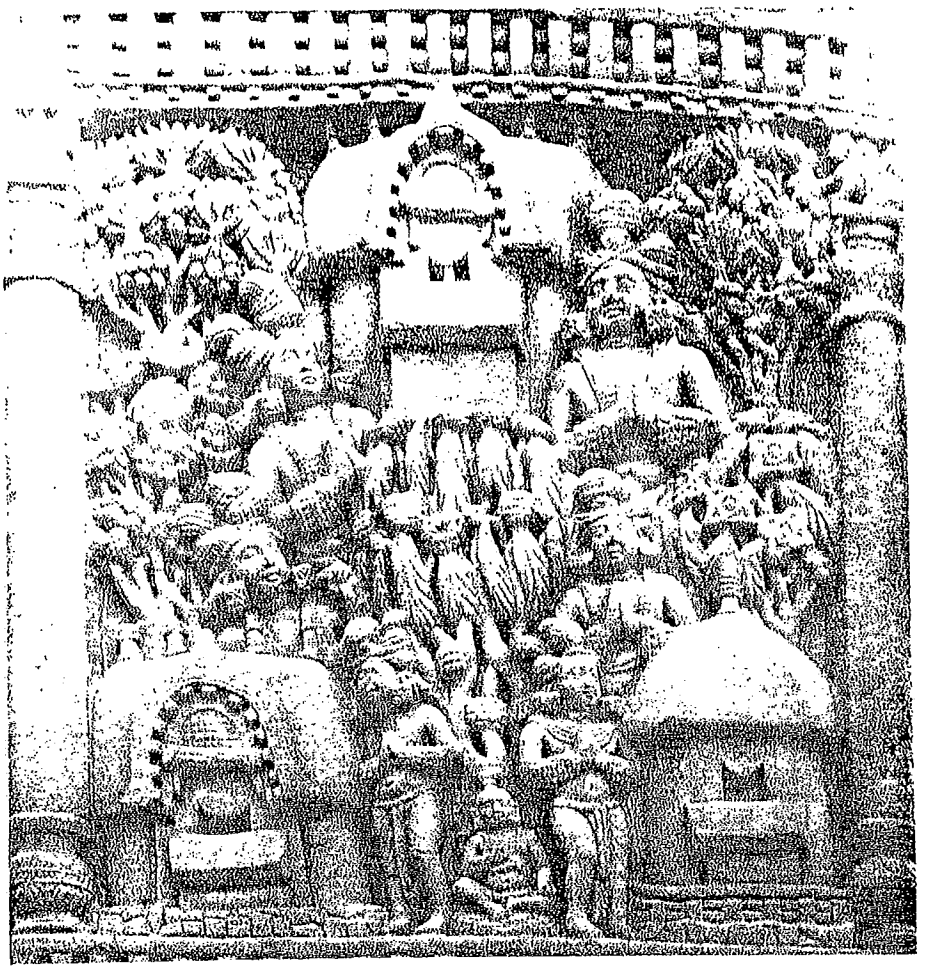
(Fig. 6) Railing pillar relief depicting the spreading of coins over the Jetavana
From Bhārhut, *c.* 100-80 BC
Indian Museum, Calcutta

There are several variations on the convention, yet the theme invariably has the same fundamental morphological basis — a large central lotus rises out of the ground plane supporting a central Buddha while branches from the main lotus stalk support additional Buddhas. There may be as few as only three Buddhas, as is typical in most later representations of the event (Fig. 3), or as many as one hundred or more images of the Buddha, each barely distinguishable from the central figure, as at Ajaṇtā (Fig. 4). Although this author can find no specific textual source for it, the scene is generally believed to represent the ultimate universality of all Buddhas. While each individual is in one sense a distinct, autonomous being with his unique characteristics, each is at once identical to the universal absolute (*Dharmakāya*) underlying all Buddhas. Since the teachings of the Buddha are aimed at expressing how the individual practitioner will attain his own enlightenment and buddhahood, the message of the Great Illusion at Śrāvasti is nothing less than every devotee's identity with the *Dharmakāya*.

Known as Saheṭh-Maheṭh (Set Mahet) on the maps, the dual sites of Śrāvasti city (Maheṭh) and the ancient Jetavana monastery (Saheṭh or Set) today are best reached by automobile via either Balarampur or Bahraich. (It must also be noted that photographic restrictions are strictly enforced and that specific written permission must be obtained to photograph at the site from the Office of the Director-General at the Archaeological Survey of India in New Delhi before going to the site.)

The wealthy merchant from Śrāvasti, Sudatta (best known by his appellation Anāthapiṇḍada or Anāthapiṇḍaka, 'Incomparable Bestower of Alms to the Poor'), met Śākyamuni while visiting a wealthy householder in

(Fig. 7) Relief depicting pilgrimage to the Jetavana
On the north *toraṇa* of Sāñcī, Stūpa I, late 1st century BC



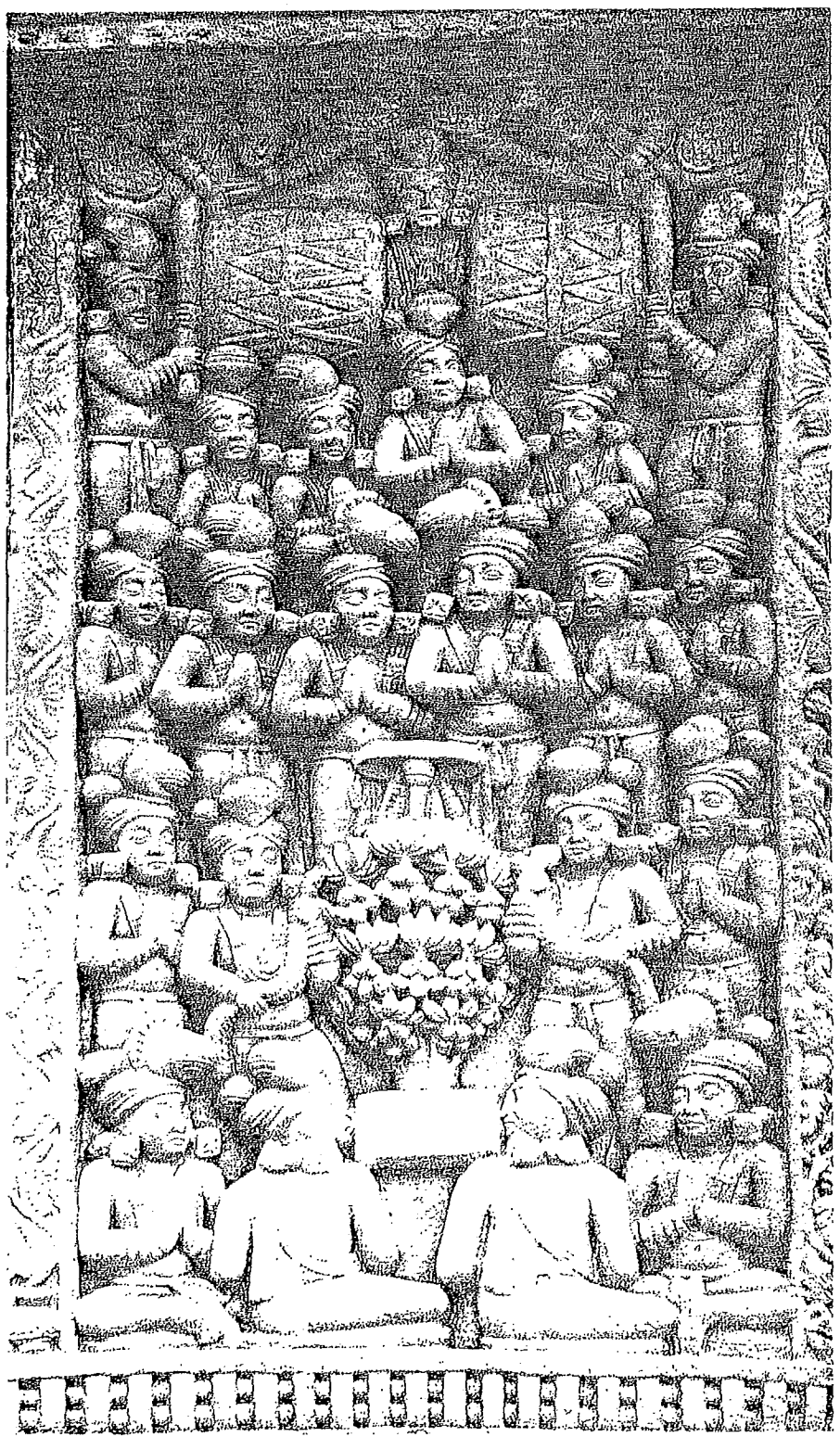
follower. During one of their meetings, Sudatta requested that the Buddha come to his home place, Śrāvasti, where he would provide the Buddha and his monks with all that would be required by them. The Buddha asked Sudatta if there was a monastery (*vihāra*) where the monks could stay and Sudatta agreed to provide one. Returning to Śrāvasti in the company of the Buddha's disciple, Śāriputra, Sudatta sought and finally agreed to buy a pleasure garden belonging to Prince Jeta. Jeta did not wish to sell and, presumably in jest, said he would sell only if the price was the amount of gold coins required to cover the ground itself. Sudatta agreed to this exorbitant demand. According to one version of the story, just as Sudatta was about to finish covering the ground, he ran out of coins and Jeta offered the remaining ground to the Buddha along with a temple on it. According to another version, just as Sudatta was completing the covering of the ground, Jeta asked to retain one portion so that he might make his own gift to the Buddha. In either case, the purchase of the ground was consummated and a *vihāra* was built on the best piece of property near Śrāvasti to which the Buddha and his followers were invited to visit.

This munificent act was well known in early times and sculptural representations of it are encountered at both Bodhgayā (Fig. 5) and Bhārhut (Fig. 6). In the representations of the Jetavana (Fig. 7) and of the *pīṭha* of the Great Illusion (Fig. 8) at Sāñcī, the gift of Sudatta has been ignored in favour of concern over visiting the site as a place of pilgrimage. Indeed, there is a distinct progression in concept between the four scenes that is very important to recognize. In the Bodhgayā scene, nothing is shown but the action of workmen placing the coins on the ground. The emphasis in this scene is obviously the overwhelming cost of the gift. In the Bhārhut relief, which is slightly later in date, the gift is still emphasized but other elements of the narrative are also included in the scene. Both the Koṣambakuṭī hall to the far left and the Gandhakuṭī at the top are clearly identified by inscriptions. In addition, in the lower centre of the composition, a mango tree enclosed in a *caitya* railing is presumably the sacred mango tree under which the Buddha sat while performing the Illusion of the Pairs. Above the tree, almost in the centre of the composition, stands the patron Sudatta with an ewer, ready to pour water over the hands of the Buddha (the act of giving the Jetavana to the Buddha). While still emphasizing the gift with the right half of the composition where workers spread the coins, the left half of the composition has been used to illustrate the places of pilgrimage at the site — the two buildings in which the Buddha Śākyamuni resided and the mango tree — places where one can gain merit by visitation. The Sāñcī reliefs, which are still later in date, are radically different in concept. In both, a completely new element, devotees, has been worked into the composition. In the Jetavana composition (Fig. 7), the devotees pay homage (*pūjā*) at three huts (presumably the lecture hall has been added) and approach offering platforms placed in front of the structures. (Since the platforms are depicted as in the huts within the Bhārhut reliefs, this signals a major change in the definitions of ritual space connected with the sites. It seems that the interiors of the huts had become so sacred that only the élite of the monk and lay devotees could approach them.) In the Sāñcī scene showing devotion to the *pīṭha* of the sacred mango tree scene (Fig. 8), the devotees have literally become the predominant element of the composition. Lined in rigid rows around the tree, they do not so much illustrate the site of the miracle or the miracle itself but the later ritual at the *pīṭha*. Thus, the metamorphosis of the message is complete; its sculptural presentation has changed from the site of great munificence, to the site of the events, to the place where one can obtain merit by homage at the site.

(Fig. 9, *opposite top*) Gandhakuṭī Jetavana monastery, *c.* 5th-6th century ruins as seen

(Fig. 10, *opposite bottom*) Koṣambakuṭī Jetavana monastery, *c.* 5th-6th century ruins as seen

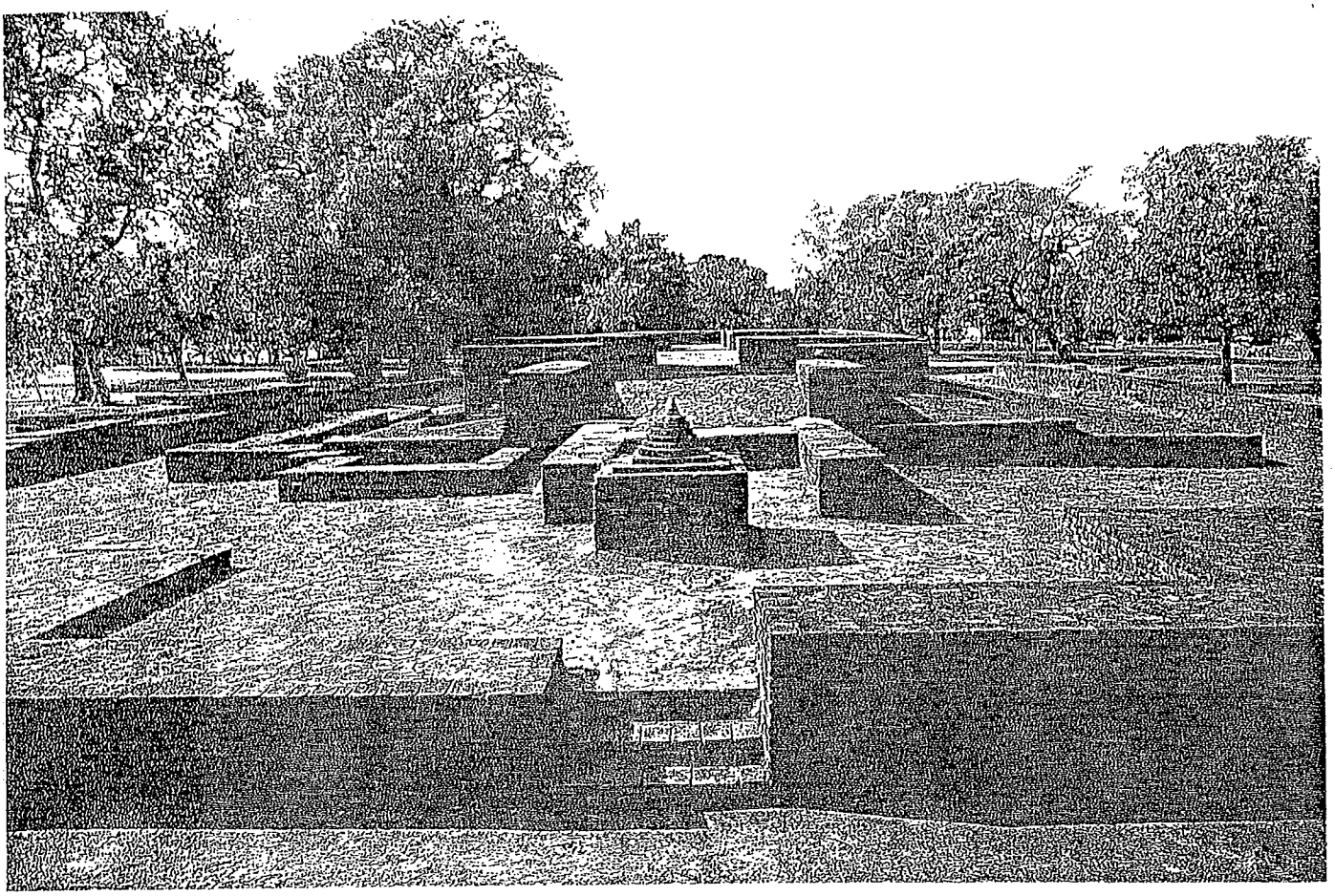
(Fig. 8) Relief depicting pilgrims paying devotion to the *pīṭha* of the 'Illusion of the Pairs' or the 'Great Illusion'
On the north *toraṇa* of Sāñcī, Stūpa I, late 1st century BC

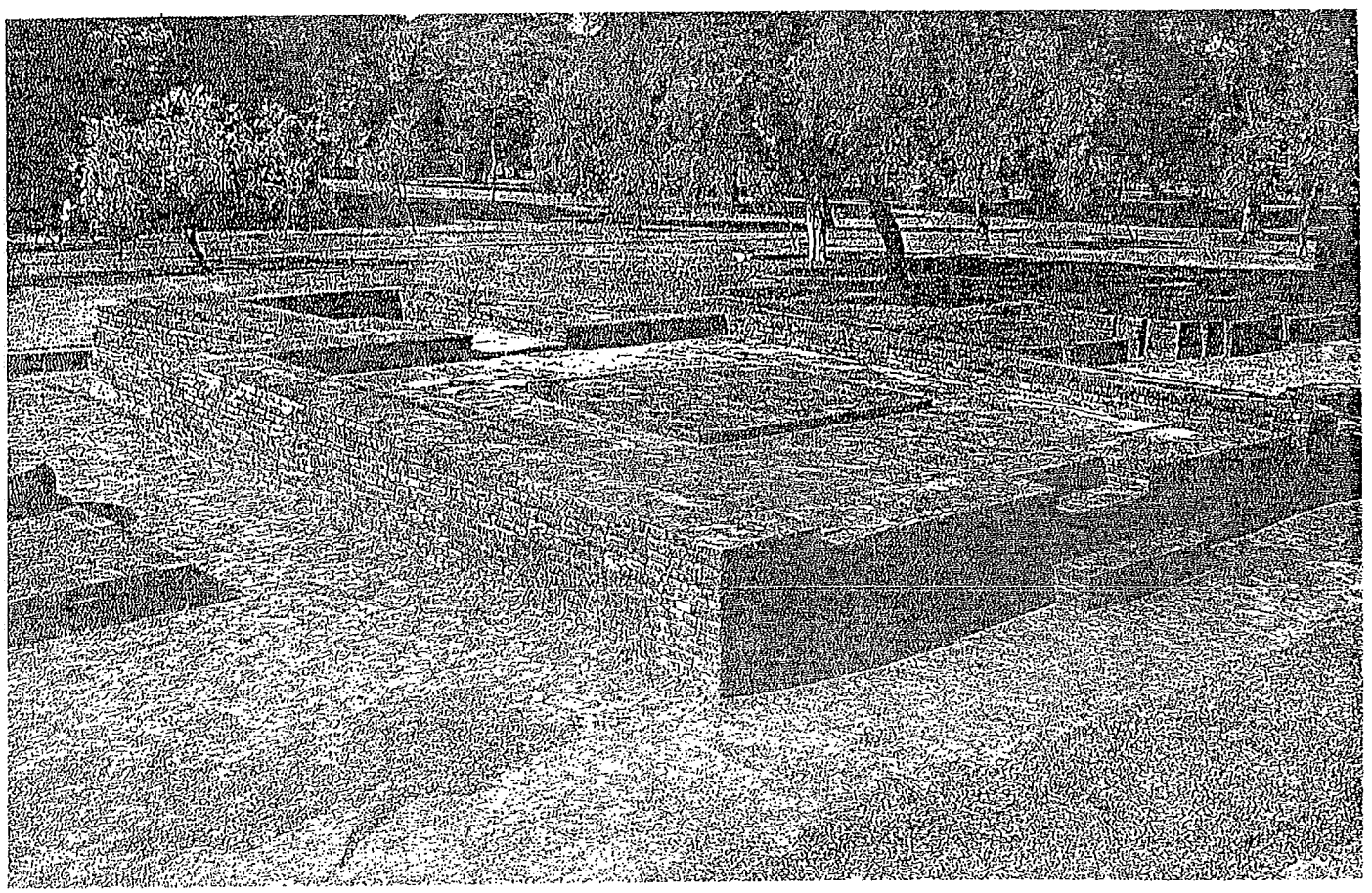


Contrary to ancient pilgrims who may have seen structures similar to those shown in the Bhārhut and Sāñcī reliefs, the modern visitor is treated only to the foundations of buildings that date from the sixth century and later. This is not to say that the early remains are missing but that the excavation levels have not been taken down that far. To excavate to further depths would necessitate destroying, at least in part, what is presently at the site. Perhaps someday, partial excavation (for example, the north half of each building site) will reveal the foundations of the buildings of greater antiquity. Even with this limitation of not being able to see the foundations of the ancient buildings themselves, the continuity of purpose at the site still gives one a profound sense of the presence of Śākyamuni. Indeed, for anyone aware of the history of Buddhism, a visit to the excavated Jetavana and, by contrast, totally unexcavated Śrāvasti is to bask in the full vitality of the period of the Buddha's ministry. Indeed, the poignancy of this feeling was experienced by Faxian, the fifth-century Chinese pilgrim:

> When Faxian and Daojing first arrived at the Jetavana monastery, and thought how the world-honoured one had formerly resided there for twenty-five years, painful reflections arose in their minds. Born in a border-land [China] along with like-minded friends, they had travelled through so many kingdoms; some of those friends had returned (to their own land), and some had (died), proving the impermanence and uncertainty of life; and today they saw the place where Buddha had lived now unoccupied by him.

Even today, walking among the ruined structures of the Jetavana one is reminded at every turn of the presence of Śākyamuni Buddha. Here he walked; at this well he drew water; he stayed in the Koṣambakuṭi, where he taught. Buddhist literature is filled





(Fig. 11) Image of 'Bodhisattva' [Buddha] of the 'Bala' type
From the Koṣambakuṭī, Jetavana monastery, *c.* 2nd quarter 2nd century AD
Indian Museum, Calcutta

twenty-five rainy seasons Śākyamuni lived at Jetavana and no brief account can do it justice.

The present form of the Gandhakuṭi, a structure in which the Buddha once resided, had become a temple by the time of the foundations now seen at the site (Fig. 9). Approached from the east through an open courtyard, the small temple is known to have had an image of the Buddha in its interior. In Faxian's time, this was purported to have been the 'original' sandalwood image of the Buddha carved at the order of King Prasenajit during the absence of Śākyamuni after his performing the 'Great Illusion' at Śrāvasti (regarding the Buddha's absence, see below). However, by the time of Xuanzang in the seventh century, the temple was in ruins and no image remained. The Koṣambakuṭī had also become a temple (Fig. 10) and, as recently as the 1862-63 archaeological tour by General Alexander Cunningham, contained a massive stone image of the so-called 'Bala type' (Fig. 11), which Cunningham removed to the Indian Museum where it is now on display. An inscription on the image, although much damaged, provides very useful information and, by comparative epigraphic evidence, yields a date, during the early Kuṣāṇa period, of *circa* 120-40 AD. Significantly, one of the three donors of the image was a Tripiṭaka master by the name of Bala. Given the style of the piece and the existence of two other Bala offerings, it is presumed that it is the same Bala who donated the Mathurā and Sārnāth images (see Part II, February 1986, pp. 28-43, Fig. 18). In addition, the inscription states that the image is for the acceptance of the Sarvāstivādin teachers of the Koṣambakuṭī, thus unequivocably identifying the hall in which it was found.

The events of Śākyamuni's life that took place at Śrāvasti could literally fill a book. Indeed, the *Dhammapada Commentary* is mostly devoted to a

Śrāvasti. Regrettably, the entire city remains an unexcavated archaeological field. Yet within the low walls, rolling mounds and few *stūpas* and tanks which are all that are perceptible to the modern visitor, Śākyamuni and his contemporaries created much of the history of Buddhism, and it was here that many of the great teachings of Buddhism were offered for the first time. One can only hope that interest in the site by visitors and pilgrims will encourage future excavation. More than at any other site, at Śrāvasti there is the possibility of laying bare the very streets on which the Buddha walked during his alms rounds and the places where his conversions and ministrations occurred. In spite of the fact that actual remains of Śākyamuni survive at other sites and some sites are more intimately associated with his attainments, it is at Śrāvasti that his ministry — his special relationship with his disciples and lay devotees — still may be felt and understood.

Sāṅkāsya

As the Teacher performed his miracle [the Illusion of the Pairs], he considered within himself, 'Where have Buddhas of the past kept residence after performing this miracle?' Straightway he became aware of the following, 'It has been their invariable custom to enter upon residence in the World of the Thirty-three [Trāyastriṁśa] and to expound the Abhidhamma [Abhidharma] Piṭaka to their mothers.'

(Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends* [*Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*], vol. 3, p. 47)

So thinking, Śākyamuni left his disciple Mahāmogallāna in charge of his disciples and lay followers and ascended directly to the Trāyastriṁśa heaven of Indra where, for three months, he taught *Abhidharma* to his mother and the other *devas* residing there (Fig. 13). Although it is not certain if this event of the Buddha's residence in Trāyastriṁśa ever became important in Indian art or iconography, the event invariably falls between the performance of the Illusion of the Pairs, or the Great Illusion, and the subsequent Descent from Trāyastriṁśa. Interestingly, it is the only time during the Buddha's ministry that he is ever said to have been absent from his disciples and lay followers. There are several narratives relating the making of images of the Buddha as surrogates of him during his absence because followers missed him so keenly. Both the image made for King Prasenajit of Kosala, noted above, and that made for King Udayana of Kauśāmbī during this period continued to be of particular importance for centuries after this period. (The Udayana image and the story of its origin, although very important in East Asian Buddhism, are well known to have been later, *circa* first century BC, emulations modelled on the image type and the narrative of the Prasenajit image, which itself probably was not actually *the* 'original' image.)

Disturbed at his absence and longing to see the Master again, multitudes gathered at Śrāvasti to await his return. They demanded of Mahāmogallāna to know when the Teacher would return. Mogallāna ascended to Trāyastriṁśa and asked the Buddha when and where he would descend, to which the latter replied:

'Mogallāna, seven days hence I will descend for the great Terminal Festival to the gate of the city of Saṁkassa [Sāṅkāsya]; those who desire to see me must go there.'

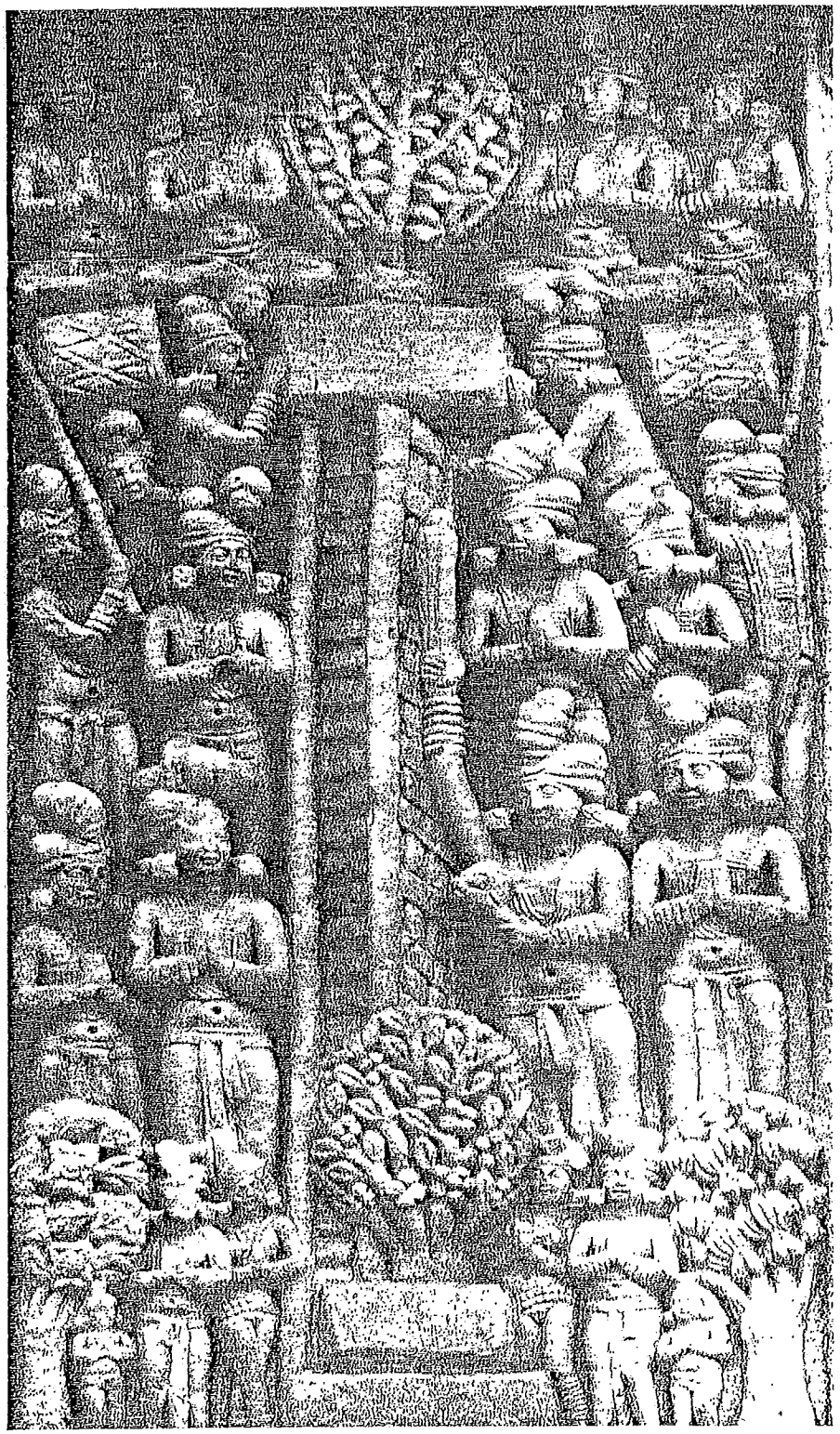
...When the season of the rains had passed and the Terminal Festival had been celebrated, the Teacher informed Sakka [Indra, King of Trāyastriṁśa Heaven], 'Great King, it is my intention to return to the path of men.' Thereupon, Sakka created three ladders, one of gold, one of jewels and one of silver. The feet of these ladders rested against the gate of the city of Saṁkassa and their tops against the summit of mount Sineru [Sumeru]. On the right side was the ladder of gold for the deities, on the left side the ladder of silver for Mahā Brahmā and his train, and in the middle the ladder of jewels for the Tathāgata [Buddha].

...The deities descended the ladder of gold, Mahā Brahmā and his train descended upon the ladder of silver, and the Supremely Enlightened One himself descended upon the ladder of jewels...Mahā Brahmā held a parasol [over the Buddha to protect him from the sun]. (Ibid. p. 53)

To this narrative both Faxian and Xuanzang also added the account of the nun (*bhikṣuṇī*) Utpalā, or Utpalavarṇā, who had vowed to be the first to see the Buddha on his descent from Trāyastriṁśa. Because she was a woman (strictly speaking, a slightly lower form of life than a male in the sixth-century BC Indic societal context), there was no hope that she would be able to crowd her way to the front of the multitudes that had gathered for the descent. The Buddha, knowing of her vow and her past accumulation of merit, changed her into a universal monarch (*cakravartin*) with the attending seven treasures (*ratna*, literally 'gems': a perfect minister, general, wife, horse, elephant, wish-granting gem and Wheel of the Law) and, according to Xuanzang, the four kinds of troops to defend her so that she might take her rightful place at the front of the multitude of kings and princes. Reaching that point, she returned to her original appearance and was the first to greet the descending Buddha, whereupon the Buddha predicted her future enlightenment.

It is also interesting to note that the narrative of Faxian relates that Indra accompanied the Buddha carrying the umbrella while Brahmā accompanied the Buddha carrying a yak tail flywhisk (*caurī*). He further noted that the Mauryan king Aśoka caused the steps to be excavated down to the level of ground water, erected a pillar with a lion on top of it and built a *vihāra* over the steps with an image of the Buddha sixteen cubits high standing in the middle of the stairs.

Although somewhat different in narrative content from the literary versions of the story, early images of the stairs *pīṭha* are well known and the site seems to have had a very important place in early Buddhist pilgrimage and pilgrimage symbolism. Curiously, and uniquely among surviving representations of the Descent from Trāyastriṁśa, the depiction from Sāñcī (Fig. 12) shows only a single staircase descending between teaching *pīṭhas* under trees; one is at the top of the stairs where the Buddha would have sat in Trāyastriṁśa and the other is at the foot of the stairs where the Buddha would have taught after his descent. Other early representations of the *pīṭha*, from the Bhārhut reliefs and those in the Gandhāran idiom, all show the triple stairs. It would seem in the case of the Sāñcī relief that it may be



(Fig. 12) Relief depicting worship of the *pīṭha* where Śākyamuni displayed the 'Illusion of the Gods' Descent'
On the north *torana* of Sāñcī, Stūpa I, late 1st century BC

a representation of either a secondary surrogate or possibly a specific representation of a particular form of the stairs that was made sometime in the middle of the first century BC. In any case, the emphasis is clearly on the teaching *pithas* and not on the stairs, perhaps a characteristic of early thinking about the events of the *Devarohaṇa-*

Gods' Descent'). In later representations, from the Gupta period (320-500) onward in Indian art, the emphasis changed entirely. In an example from the site of Kurkihār near Bodhgayā in modern Bihar state (Fig. 14), we see the Buddha attended by Indra and Brahmā descending the triple stairs, with Indra and Brahmā much reduced

and clearly acting as his servants or attendants by Brahmā's carrying the umbrella (Brahmā's pole of the umbrella conventionally supports the here damaged canopy above the head of the Buddha in spite of the change in angle) while Indra carries a bowl of sweets. In this example, the stairs are simple geometric forms with rows of conventionalized gems bordering the stairs on which Śākyamuni is about to walk. Śākyamuni's gesture with his right hand is *varada-mudrā* (often interpreted as the 'bestowal [of gifts]'). His 'gift', of course, is not something material but the offering of the prediction of enlightenment and the promise of future attainment. Implicit in the gesture is the ability to practise as a monk. In short, in the thousand years from the Sāñcī relief to the time of the stele from Kurkihār, the message of the 'Descent from Trāyastriṁśa' has changed from the promulgation of the teachings, especially the *Abhidharma*, to the direct promise of enlightenment to all observers of the stele.

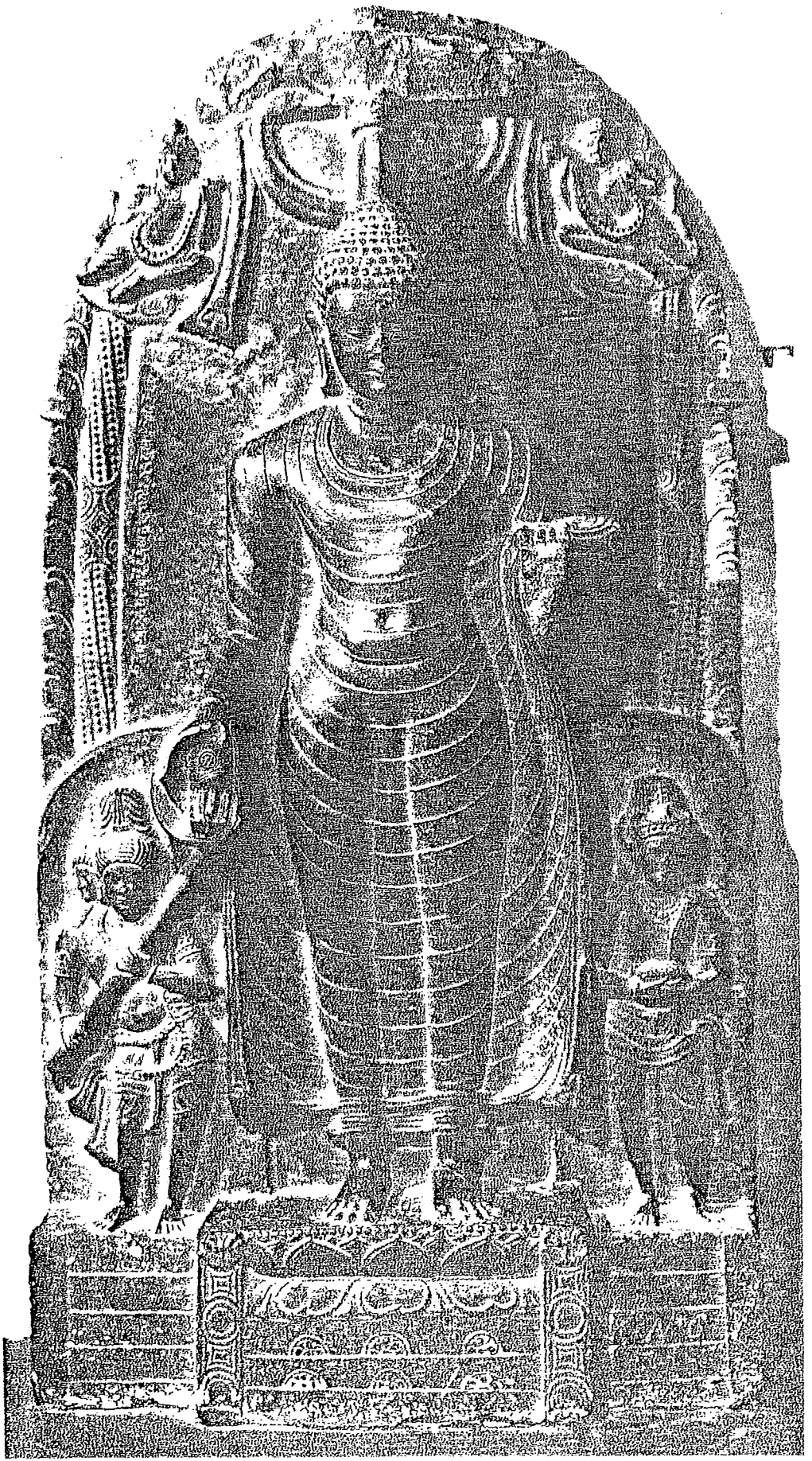
The real importance of the *Devarohaṇa-prātihārya*, however, seems, so far as this author is aware, to be lost to modern scholarship. Above all else, the event demonstrates the Buddha's domination over the traditional gods. Indra, the king of the Trāyastriṁśa gods (the thirty-three gods of the ancient Vedic literature) behaves before the enlightened Śākyamuni as an earthly king would before the holiest of priests or teachers. Even Brahmā, the archetype of the priest in the transcendent realms, is subservient to the Buddha. This is not to say that the Buddha is either a universal God or some sort of minor god; on the contrary, he has achieved such status because he *is* a human but one who has made the attainment that places him beyond any or all gods. His followers know him as the mortal teacher of Transcendent Wisdom (*prajñā*) and as the 'doer' of compassionate actions (*karuṇā*). He has mastered the two to

reasons this writer has never understood, the detailed and complex accounting of the practice of 'Brahmanism' outlined in the early literature of Buddhism has, with the exception of Helmut von Glasenapp's *Brahma et Bouddha* (Paris, 1937), gone almost completely unstudied. In the *nikāya* of the Pāli canon, there are detailed accounts of how Buddhist practitioners, especially monks, will attain union with Brahmā as a result of their having realized the four *Brahmāvihāras*, the states of benevolent love (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and [viewing with] equanimity or detachment [of the pure mind] (*upekṣā*). Also in the Pāli canon, laymen are often assured of rebirth in the realms of Trāyastriṁśa as the result of some action benefitting the Buddhist community. In short, there was apparently a dual religious system in Brahmanism at the time of the Buddha promising afterlife for the religious in Brahmā's Brahmāloka and to the laymen in Trāyastriṁśa. Ultimately, we learn in texts such as the *Atharvaveda* (a pre-Buddhist text of about 1000 to 800 BC) that it was the union of Indra (who is the self of knowledge: *prajñātman*) and Brahmā that provided the final release of the practitioner. Thus, Indra and Brahmā formed the basis of the wisdom and compassion duality in the pre-Śākyamuni period and it is by transcending both of their respective achievements that Śākyamuni achieved his ultimate attainment. It has to be understood that the dual cult of Indra and Brahmā was the orthodoxy of the time and that the Buddha was in a position of superseding their cult with one of his teachings of the *Dharma*. Thus, the subordination of Indra and Brahmā to Śākyamuni may have been, in its time, the single most important statement of the entire set of the *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya*.

(Fig. 13) Śākyamuni preaching the *Abhidharma* to his mother and the rest of the gods of Trāyastriṁśa
Gangarama monastery, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 20th century

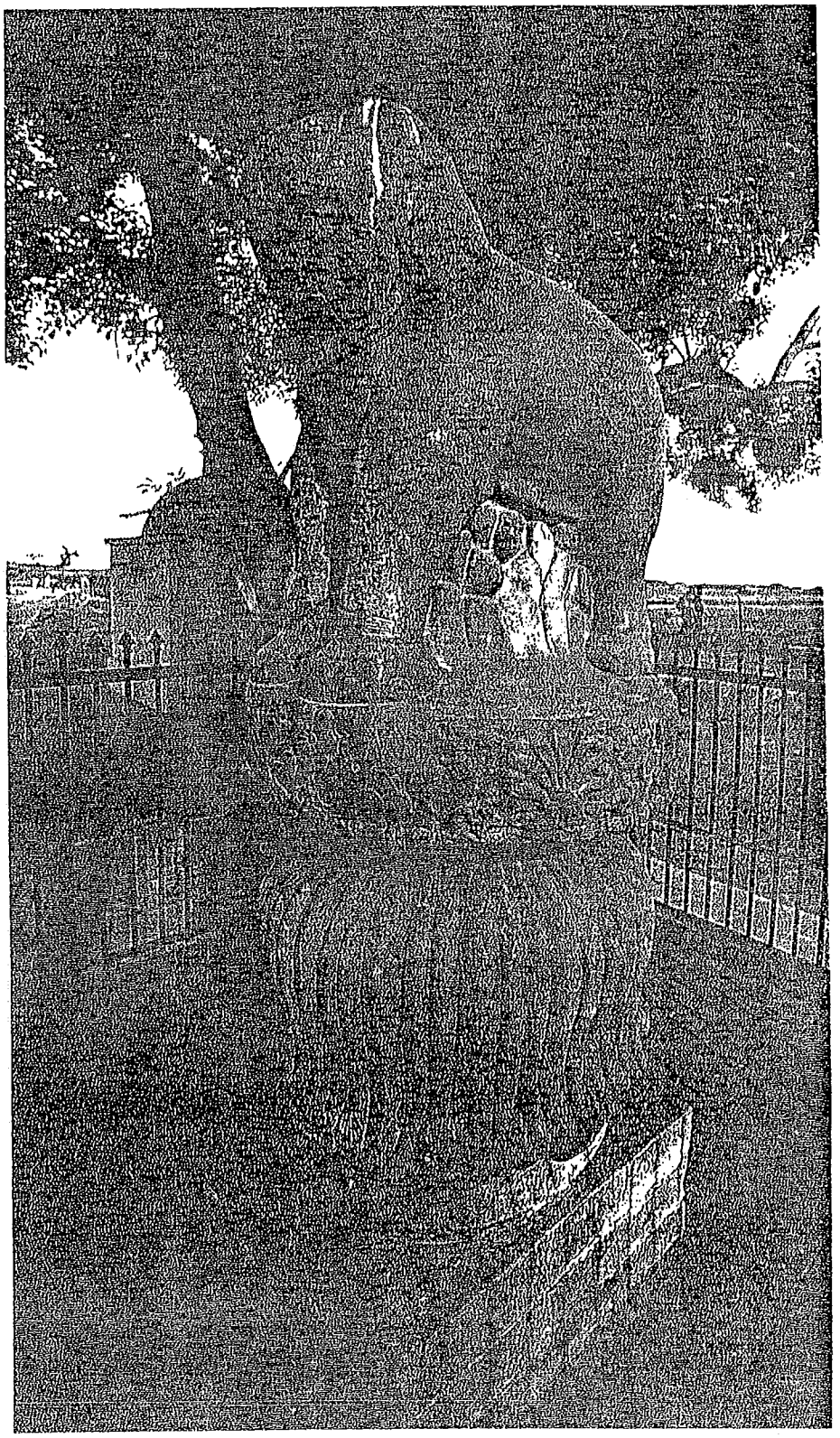
Unfortunately, except for the identification of an 'Aśokan' elephant capital by Cunningham, virtually nothing has been accomplished in the way of excavation at either the city of Sāṅkāsya or the Stūpa of the Triple Stairs. Today, the site is difficult to reach by a very long drive from either Delhi or Lucknow and has no rest house facilities. The ancient city of Sāṅkāsya is one of the largest archaeological areas in northern India, for it covers several square kilometres. Some archaeologists at the University of Kanpur have initiated a site survey, but their work has only begun in the last few years and nothing has been published so far. Although the vast expanse of the ruined city (about equal in size to imperial Rome) beckons those concerned with archaeology in a more general way, from the viewpoint of the Buddhist pilgrim, only the closely fenced 'Aśokan' capital (Fig. 15) and the ruined Stūpa of the Triple Stairs are there to visit.

Faxian mentions a lion capital, not an elephant one, at Sāṅkāsya, yet he wrote from memory after his return to China and may have been in error. Alternatively, the elephant may well have been damaged prior to his having seen it (apparently the capitals of such tall pillars were frequently struck by lightning and damaged before their final falls). Thus, since the location of the *stūpa* at the gate of the city and the presence of the pillar (actually only the capital has so far been found) matches the descriptions of the Chinese



(Fig. 14, *opposite*) Śakyamuni displaying the 'Illusion of the Gods' Descent'
From Kurkihār, Bihar state, *c.* 10th century
Indian Museum, Calcutta

(Fig. 15) Elephant capital of the 'Aśokan' pillar at Sāṅkāsya
c. 250 BC



travellers perfectly, there is little doubt that the site is the location of the descent. The capital is quite different in style from the rest of the Mauryan capitals for it has much softer detailing of the minor features. This suggests that it may be either the product of provincial workmanship or may be of a different date than, for example, the Sārnāth and Sāñcī capitals. However, the style of the elephant itself is clearly mid Mauryan (about the middle to the end of Aśoka's reign).

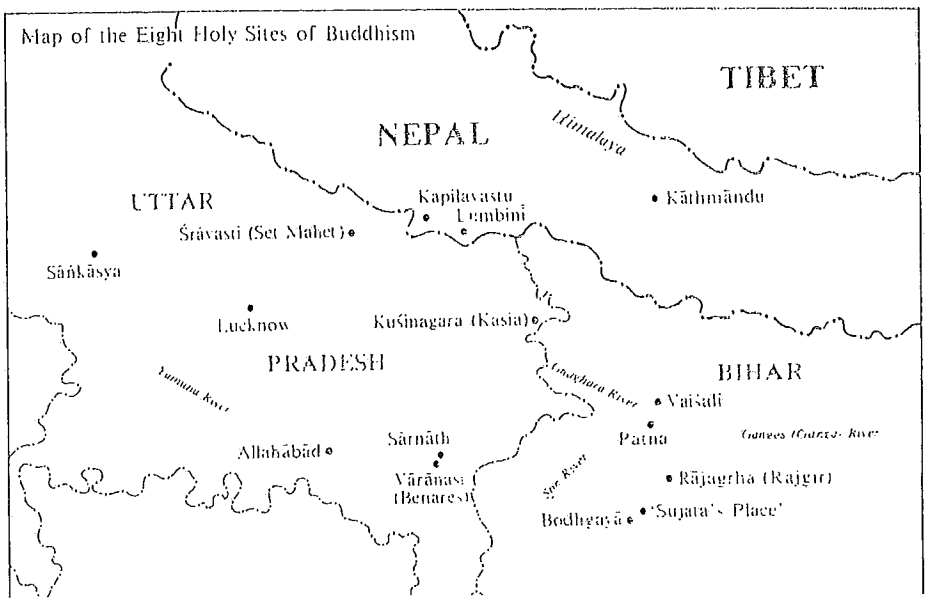
The *stūpa* (Fig. 16) is presently topped by a Śaivite shrine, and because the shrine is in active daily worship, it is not eligible for excavation under present Indian guidelines for religious monuments. Circumambulation demonstrates conclusively that the mound is a *stūpa*, indeed, a very large one of the exact type that would have been raised at so important a location as the place where the Buddha demonstrated his dominion over the traditional gods.

Difficult to reach and offering little to see once one arrives there, the Sāṅkāsya site at once both defines the westernmost activity of Śākyamuni and is the place of the demonstration of the pre-eminence of the Buddhist religion in the Indic sphere. For the true pilgrim, it is one of the key sites of the route.

n.b. Those readers familiar with Alfred Foucher's widely held 'aniconic' ('without images') theory of early Indian art will find these interpretations slightly divergent from that theory. The aniconic theory suggests that, because the Buddha was so sacred, the 'severest doctors' of the religion would not allow images to be made of him. According to Foucher, this situation existed until about the middle of the first century AD, when 'popular pressure' and/or 'Mahāyānist tendencies' introduced images of a quasi-'deified' Buddha. According to Foucher's theory, there existed a pre-image period (widely known as the 'aniconic period of Buddhism', i.e. *c.* BC 483-50 AD) during which only 'aniconic' symbols were used to represent Śākyamuni. Therefore, the representations of the *pīṭha* of Buddhism illustrated here have been taken symbolically and have usually been discussed as 'the Buddha preaching' rather than the observationally obvious '*pīṭha* of the First Sermon'. There appear to be two basic flaws to the aniconic theory. First, there is relatively extensive Buddhist literature discussing early images of which there is virtually no reason to doubt. Second, there are early Buddha images that still survive from pre-Christian era dates, at least one of which is dated to the equivalent of 36 BC under the Han dynasty in China. The implication of this last image is that the tradition had to exist in India, be transferred to Gandhāra, passed on to China

(Fig. 16) Stūpa of the Triple Stairs(?) at Sāṅkāsya
Date uncertain

and become popular enough that sufficient images were made so that one had a chance of survival. This suggests a substantially earlier date than any yet discussed in modern scholarship for the origin of the Buddha image — long before the railings of Bodhgayā, Bhārhut and Sāñcī and other similar 'aniconic' images discussed above. Thus, this author feels that it is unwise to further perpetuate the modern scholarly myth of the aniconic phase of Buddhist art when it may not have existed at all and certainly did not exist for anything like the length of time suggested for it by the theory's originator. (See the list of 'suggested further reading' at the end of the last part of this article for references.)



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Orientations July 1986 28-40

Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus

A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism, Part IV

John C. Huntington

All five of the previously discussed events in the life of Śākyamuni Buddha have fallen into an obvious chronological order.* However, the next two, the 'Gift of the Monkey', which took place at Vaiśali, and the 'Taming of Nālāgiri', which took place at Rājagṛha, can only be placed chronologically in a general way as occurring during the Buddha's ministry. Indeed, although in modern literature these two are conventionally discussed after the correlated events of the 'Illusion of the Twins' and the 'Illusion of the Gods' Descent', there is no certainty as to when the 'Gift' or the 'Taming' occurred between the post-enlightenment phase and the period immediately prior to the death of the Buddha (the *Parinirvāṇa*).

Vaiśali

[After observing an elephant attend the Buddha by bringing water and fruits, a monkey said to himself,] 'I'll do something too.' One day as he was running about, he happened to see some stick-honey free from flies. He broke the stick off, took the honey-comb, stick and all, broke off a plantain-leaf, placed the honey on the leaf, and offered it to the Teacher. The Teacher took it. The monkey watched to see whether or not he would eat it. He observed that the Teacher, after taking the honey, sat down without eating. 'What can be the matter?' thought he. He took hold of the stick by the tip, turned it over, carefully examining it as he did so, whereupon he discovered some insect's eggs. Having removed these gently, he again gave the honey to the Teacher. The Teacher ate it.

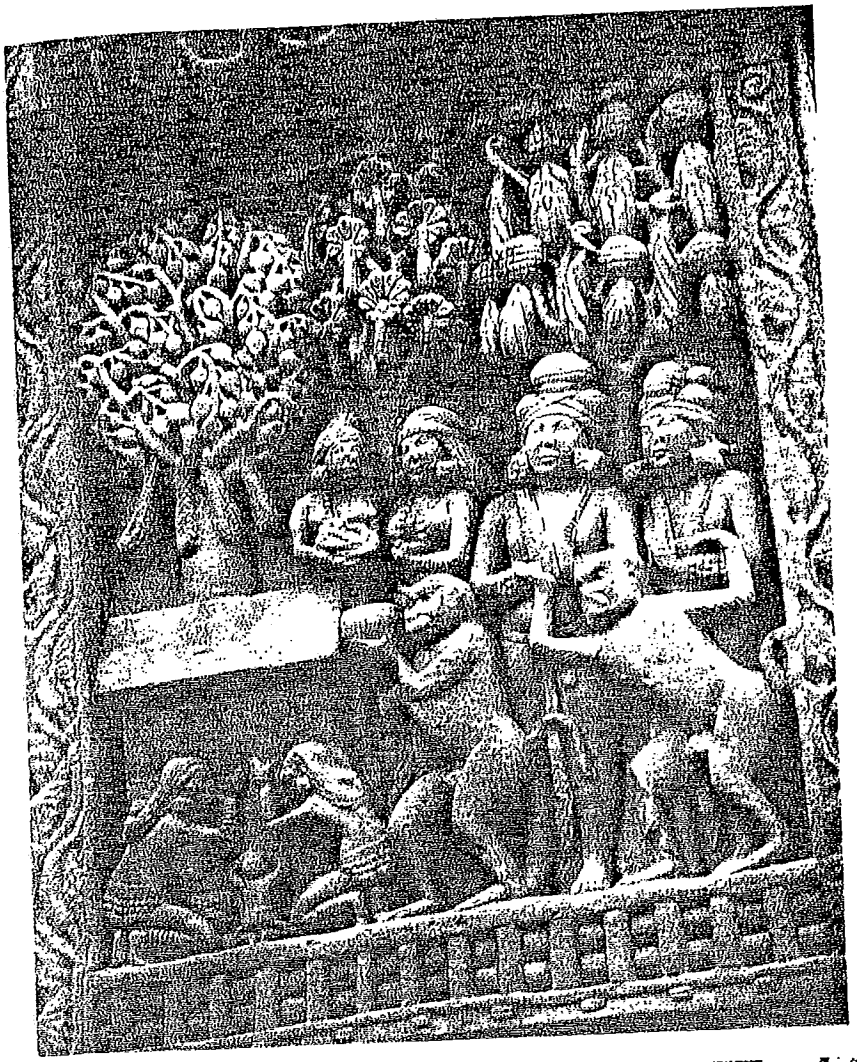
The monkey was so delighted [because the Buddha had accepted his offering] that he leaped from one branch to another and danced about in great glee. But the branches he grasped and the branches he stepped on broke off. Down he fell on the stump of a tree and was impaled. So he died. And solely because of his faith in the Teacher he was reborn in the World of the Thirty-three [Trāyastriṁśa] in a golden mansion thirty leagues in measure, with a retinue of a thousand celestial nymphs [*apsarās*].

(Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends* [*Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā*], Part 1, p. 180.)

With the exception of Hanuman in the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative, monkeys in Indian literature are generally mischievous, naughty creatures that are surely condemned to a still lower life in their next incarnations. Yet in this and several other versions of the story, the monkey derives the immediate benefit of rebirth in the Trāyastriṁśa because of his gift to the Buddha. The 'benefits of faith' type of story is very commonplace in Buddhist literature. In the Pāli canon, there are two works, the *Vimānavatthu* (*The Stories of the Mansions* [that one will be reborn to in paradise because of one's good actions]) and the *Petavatthu* (*The Stories of the Hungry Ghosts* [who have been reborn in a lower birth as a result of bad actions]), that set out in detail the benefits of being generous to the Buddhist community and to the Buddha in particular.

The narrative of the monkey's gift is not closely tied to Vaiśali in surviving literature. However, the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (in India 629-45) relates that the place of the offering was marked by a *stūpa* just to the south of the so-called Monkey Tank at Vaiśali. While a large depression at Vaiśali is believed to be the Monkey Tank, no remains of the *stūpa* commemorating the Gift of the Monkey

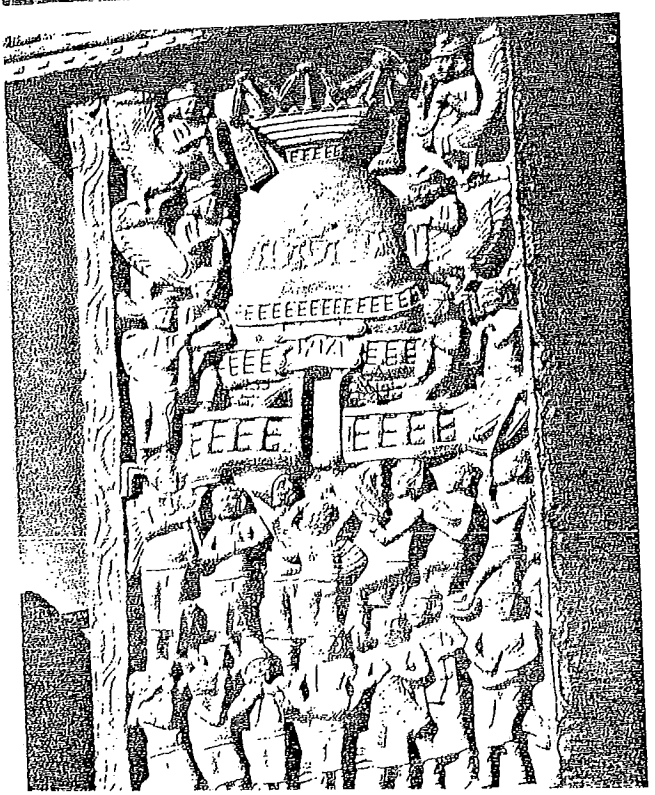
*Part I (*Orientations*, November 1985, pp. 46-61) discusses Aśoka's archetypal pilgrimage, Lumbinī and Kapilavastu, and Bodhgayā and its environs; Part II (February 1986, pp. 28-43), the Ṛṣipatana Mṛgadāva (Vārāṇasī and Sārnāth); and Part III (March 1986, pp. 32-46), Śrāvasti and the Jetavana Monastery, and Sāṅkāsya. Part V will include a discussion of the Buddha's death at Kuśinagara, the division of the relics and the eight *mahāstūpas*, Aśoka's division of the relics, and notes on recent archaeological discoveries concerning the location of Kapilavastu, and the inscription of the Piprahwa Reliquary.

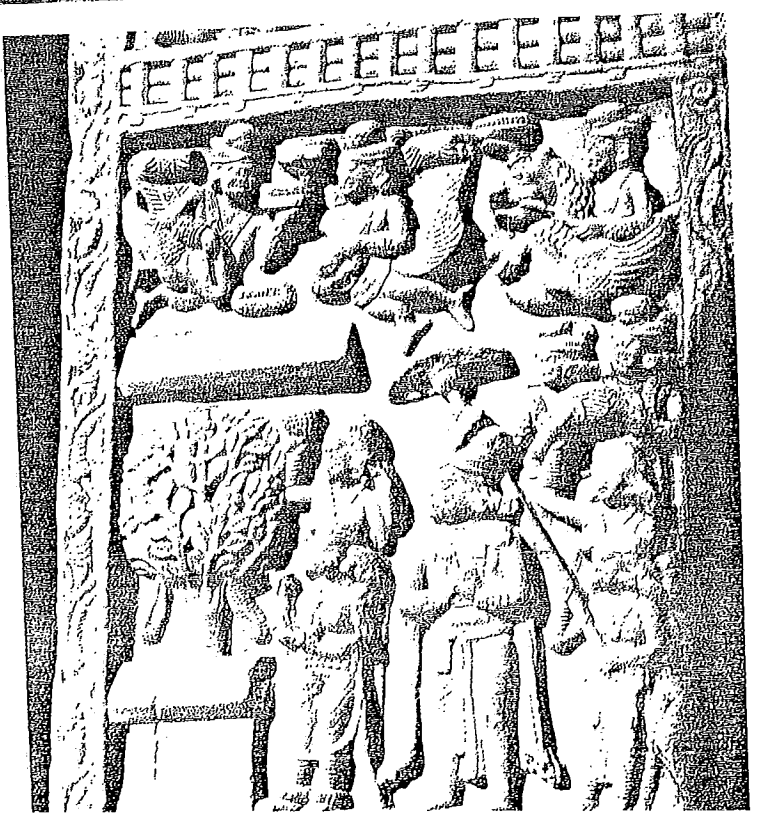


(Fig. 1) Gift of the Monkey
Sāñcī, Stūpa I, north *toraṇa*, west pillar, east face, *c.* BC 25-25 AD

(Fig. 2) Worship at the Vaiśali *mahāstūpa*
Sāñcī, Stūpa I, north *toraṇa*, west pillar, east face, *c.* BC 25-25 AD

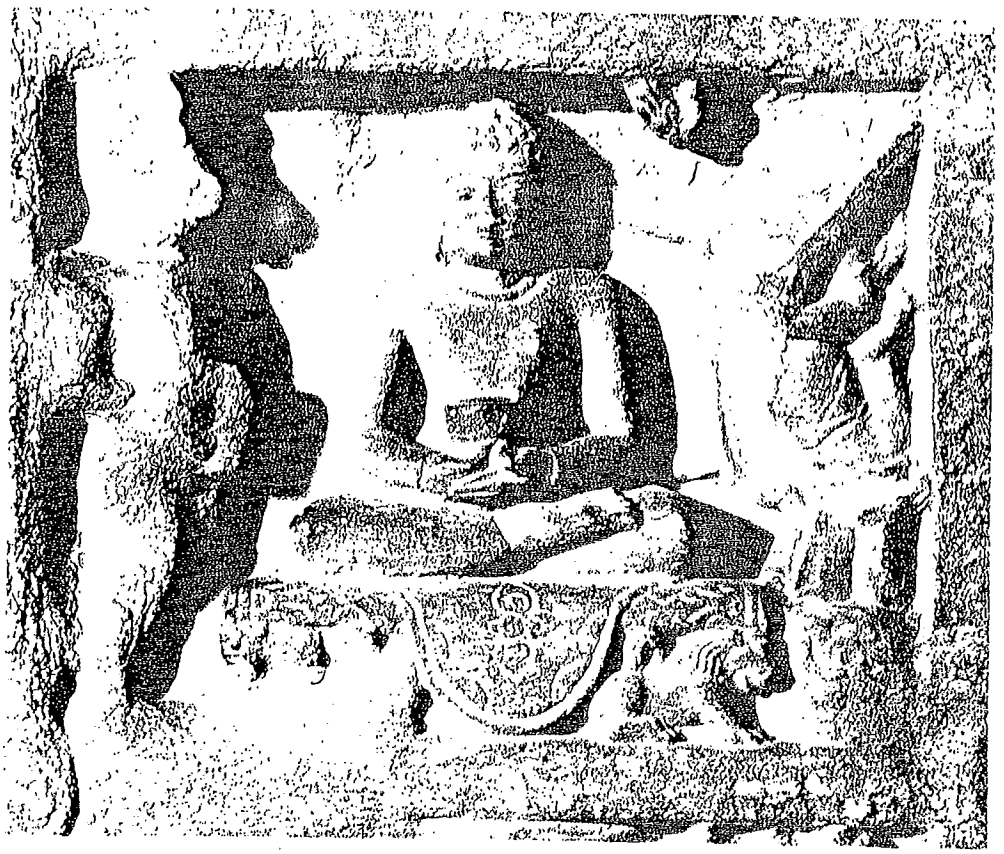
(Fig. 3) Worship at the Ambāpalīvana *pīṭha*
Sāñcī, Stūpa I, north *toraṇa*, west pillar, east face, *c.* BC 25-25 AD





(Fig. 4) Gift of the Monkey, on a stele of the eight life scenes
Sārnāth, 5th century
Sārnāth Museum

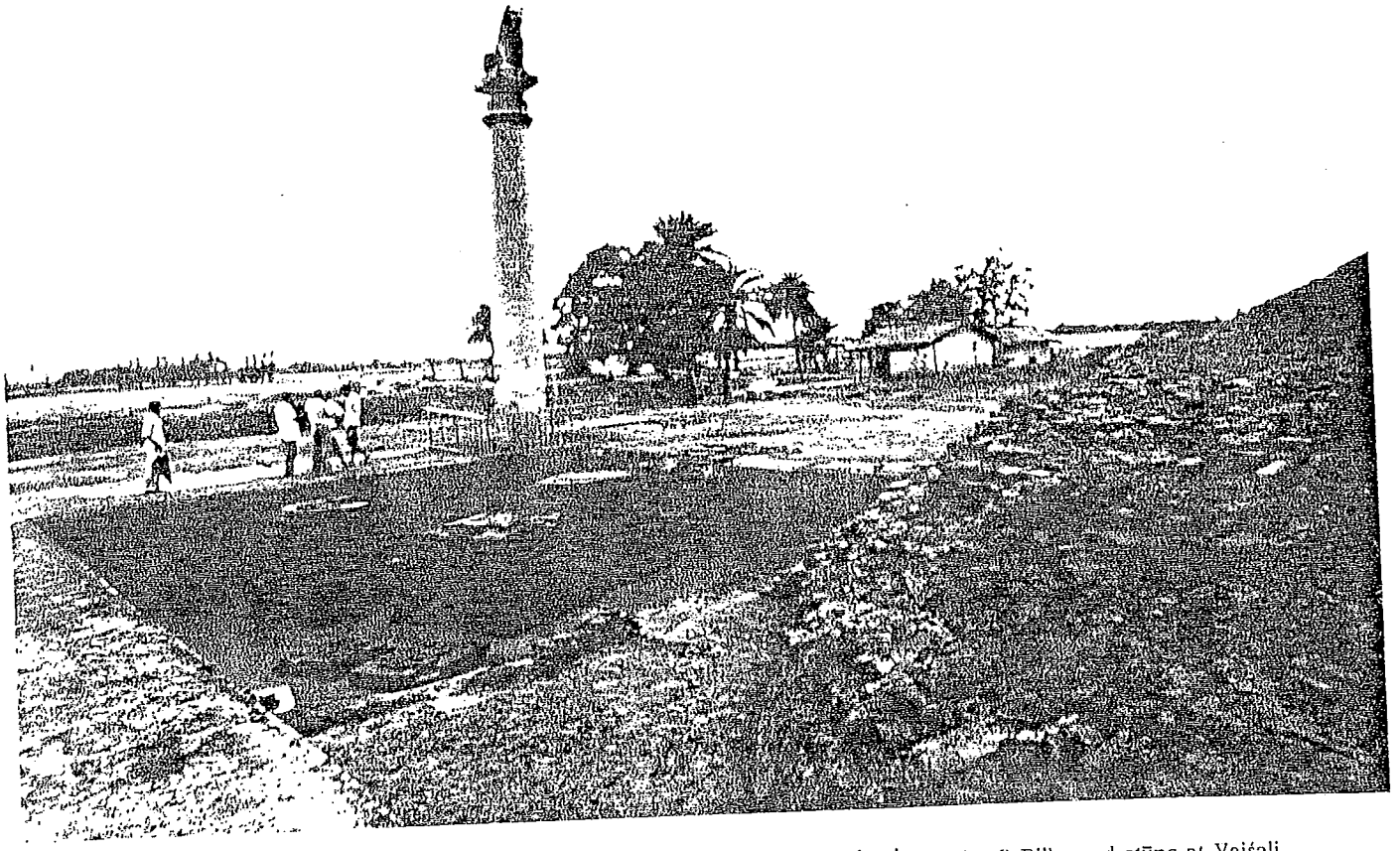
(Fig. 5) Gift of the Monkey, from an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* manuscript, dated 1165
Bharat Kalā Bhavan, Vārāṇasī



have been found at this time.

Although little known in literature, the Gift of the Monkey, or at least the *pīṭha* where the event took place, is well represented in art and examples survive from as early as the Sāñcī *toraṇas* (*c.* BC 25-25 AD; Fig. 1). In the Sāñcī example, which may be a re-enactment of the event at the site before a group of pilgrims, a monkey is shown before the *pīṭha* where the Buddha would have been seated offering a bowl; behind him another monkey (or perhaps the same monkey in a repeated action) makes a gesture of offering with his right hand. Devotees kneel in front of the *pīṭha* while other pilgrims circumambulate and bring offerings. The subject does not appear among the sculptural remains at the earlier sites of Bhārhut and Bodhgayā. However, it cannot be concluded that the Gift of the Monkey narrative and *pīṭha* did not exist at the time those monuments were created, since more than half of each of those railings is missing and there is no means to reconstruct the lacking scenes.

The Sāñcī scene is especially interesting for it is placed vertically, on the eastern face of the west pillar of the north *toraṇa*, between two other depictions of events that also took place at

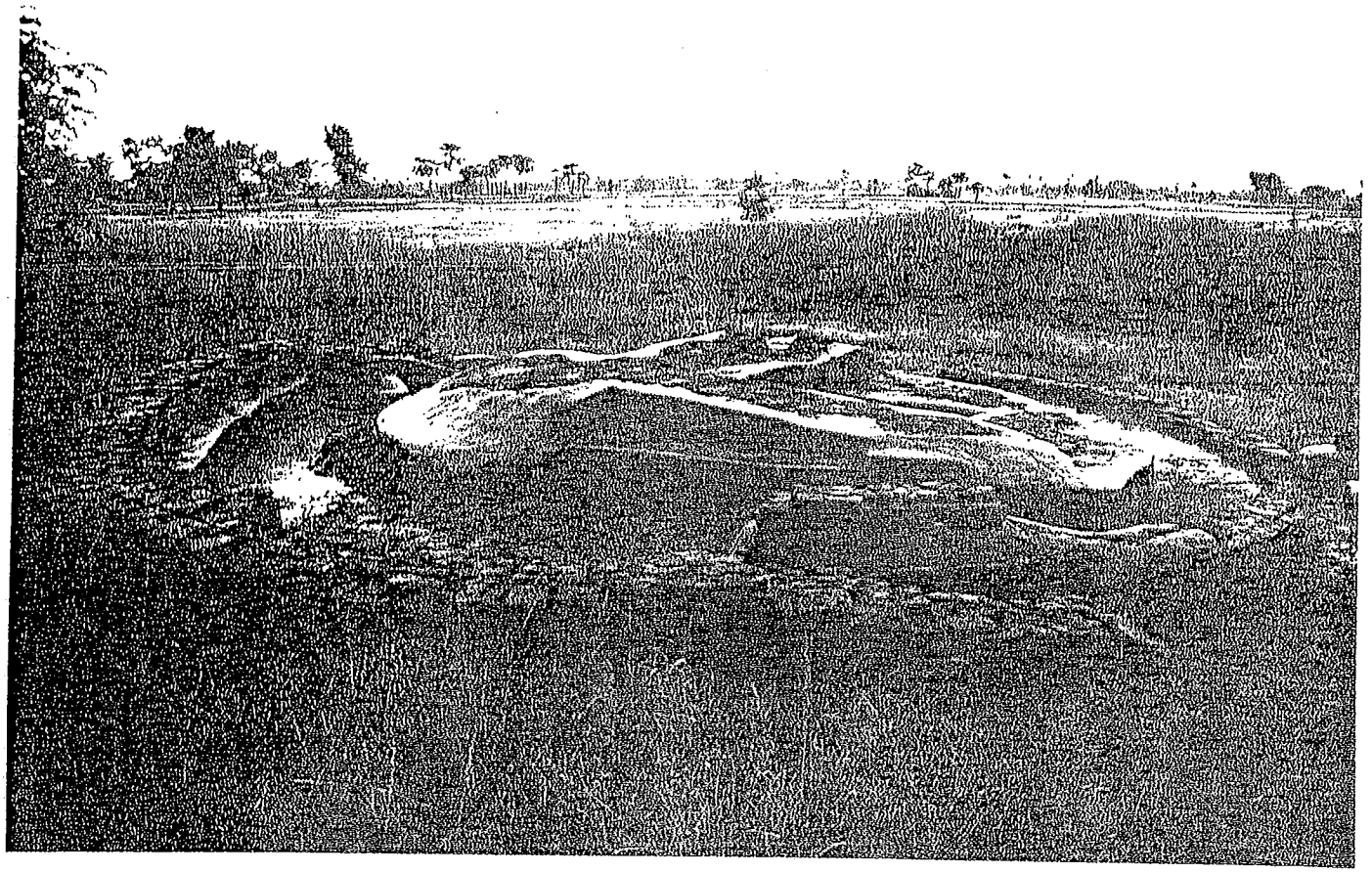


(Fig. 6) Pillar and *stūpa* at Vaiśali Aśoka's reign (*c.* 270-220 BC)

(Fig. 7) Capital on pillar in Figure 6

Vaiśali. The upper scene shows worship at a *stūpa* (Fig. 2) while the lower scene depicts worship at a *pīṭha* under a mango tree (Fig. 3). Since Vaiśali was famous for the Ambapālīvana, a mango grove where Śākyamuni frequently taught, the *pīṭha* of the Gift of the Monkey and one of the eight *mahāstūpas*, one of the original eight *stūpas* to contain the portion of the relics of Śākyamuni given to the Licchavis (the rulers of Vaiśali), the whole face of the pillar would seem to be a depiction of the Vaiśali *pīṭhas* (see note in Part V). As no other site has the same combination of *pīṭhas*, the logical solution, offered here for the first time, is that the pillar represents the Vaiśali *pīṭhas* (see also the following section on Rājagṛha).

Later representations of the 'Gift' differ from the textual description of the event, for the monkey is usually shown offering the honey in a bowl, not a leaf, and dying by diving head-first into a well, as seen in a late fifth-[illegible] representation from Sārnāth of the scene, while to the right he is seen falling, or as popularly interpreted, committing suicide, by diving down a well. At the top right is the monkey-turned-*deva* rising towards the Trāyastriṁśa heaven. The relatively poor condition makes the scene somewhat difficult to read but the outline of the monkey offering the bowl may be seen quite well on the left, while the legs and tail sticking up out of the well would almost seem to support the knees of the *deva* flying off to Trāyastriṁśa at the right. Interestingly, a much later scene, dated to the fourth year of Govindapāla (1165), painted in a manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (Fig. 5) seems to combine elements from the two previous compositions. At the far right, a representation of the monkey makes a rather wild gesture of devotion like that of the secondary representation of the monkey in the Sāñcī relief. Next, the monkey offers the bowl to the Buddha and then is seen, legs only, going down the well. The scene is



(Fig. 8) *Mahāstūpa* over the Licchavi's portion of the relics at Vaiśali

Trāyastriṁśa at the top right. It would seem that the feature of the well became part of the story by no later than the fifth century and continued to the end of Buddhist practice in India.

Regardless of the changes in composition and details of the story, the scene always represents the potential of all beings to attain higher *gatis* (levels of rebirth) by faith and offerings to the community of monks. Having made his sincere offering and having had it accepted by the Buddha, the monkey was assured of higher rebirth.

Vaiśali was a famous city in Śākyamuni's time and, together with Rājagṛha and Śrāvasti, is considered to be one of the locations in which Śākyamuni offered many important teachings. Although many more teachings are recorded as having been offered at Śrāvasti and at Rājagṛha than at Vaiśali, the fact that the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* was taught at Vaiśali makes it one of the most important *loci* of Mahāyāna Buddhism from the East Asian viewpoint. The *stūpa* commemorating the place of the teaching of this *sūtra* as reported by Xuanzang is no longer known (he indicated that it was five or six *li* [one or two kilometres] to the northeast of the city).

Also reported by Xuanzang, the column and *stūpa* attributed to Aśoka still exist in remarkably good condition. Although much reduced in apparent height by the build-up of alluvial mud from nearly annual flooding of the area, the column (Fig. 6) is one of but two Mauryan pillars that are still standing with their capitals intact. The lion (Fig. 7) is very similar in style to the lions at Sārnāth (see Part II).

The greatest archaeological *desideratum* at Vaiśali is the location of the monastery known as Ambapālīvana. Unfortunately, Faxian's and Xuanzang's reports are completely contradictory regarding where the famous grove of the courtesan Ambapālī (also Āmrapālī and Āmrapālikā) was. In both the *Mahāvagga* (VI:29-30) and the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (*Sacred Books of the East*, XI, pp. 30-34), it is related how the courtesan Ambapālī went out with her chariots to greet the Buddha, who was on his way to Vaiśali, and she invited him and his community of monks to be her guests at a meal the following day. Indeed, she had bested the young nobles of Vaiśali by inviting and receiving acceptance from the Buddha before they could do so. After she had received the Buddha and his followers and had a discourse with the Buddha about the *Dharma*, she offered him her park of mango trees to use as a retreat. Her gift was accepted and the park became the primary retreat for Buddhists in early Vaiśali. The location and full archaeological investigation of this important site should offer much further data about the time of the Buddha and his immediate successors.

Recently excavated at Vaiśali, one of the four known *mahastupas* is now little but a protected mound of low walls and foundations (Fig. 8) The Licchavis received a portion of the relics after the cremation of Sakyamuni and raised a very small mound of clay over it. This was later enlarged by Asoka and then again during the Kuṣāṇa period. Relative to the Aśokan pillar, its location exactly corresponds to the description given by Xuanzang. (For the *mahastupas*, see the 'Distribution of

the Relics' section, Part V).

Vaiśali is a site that is being actively investigated at this time. Upon arriving there, the visitor is encouraged to go directly to the Archaeological Survey of India's site museum both to see the excavated materials and to learn of any new work that may have been done in the recent past. Access to Vaiśali is now very easy since the 'Seven Mile Bridge' has been built over the Ganges River from Patna north. The bridge is the gateway to all travel in northern Bihar and Vaiśali is now an easy day's excursion from Patna, where accommodation is convenient.

Rājagṛha

[After a series of attempts on Śākyamuni's life, his cousin Devadatta still plots to murder him.] Now at that time there was a fierce elephant in Rājagaha, [Pāli for Rājagṛha] a man-slayer, called Nālāgiri.

[Devadatta plots with the mahouts to have the elephant released in the Buddha's path along the carriage-road.]

Then the Lord, having dressed for the morning, taking his bowl and robe, entered Rājagaha for alms food together with several monks.

Then the Lord went along that carriage-road. Then those mahouts saw the Lord coming along that carriage-road; seeing him, having let loose the elephant Nālāgiri, they brought him down to that carriage-road. The elephant Nālāgiri saw the Lord coming from afar; seeing him, having lifted up his trunk, he rushed toward the Lord, his ears and tail erect. Those monks saw the elephant Nālāgiri coming in the distance; seeing him they spoke thus to the Lord:

'Lord, this elephant Nālāgiri, coming along this carriage-road, is a fierce man-slayer; Lord, let us turn back,...'

'Wait monks, do not be afraid; this is impossible, monks, it cannot come to pass that anyone should deprive a Truth-finder of life by aggression; monks, Truth-finders attain *nibbāna* [*nirvāna*] not because of an attack...'

Thus the Lord suffused the elephant Nālāgiri with loving-kindness of mind. Then the elephant Nālāgiri...put down his trunk, approached the Lord...[and] stood in front of the Lord. Then the Lord, stroking the elephant Nālāgiri's forehead with his right hand...

[Thus was Nālāgiri tamed.]

(*Cullavagga*, VII, 3.9-12, I.B. Horner trans.)

The seemingly simple story of the Buddha Śākyamuni subduing an elephant let loose in his path can actually be read at several levels. First, it shows the power of the Buddha to overcome evil and his ability to set the intermediaries of evil-doers on the right path. (The elephant is permanently tamed by his encounter with the Buddha.) It may also be seen as another episode in the ongoing effort of the jealous and inherently evil Devadatta (literally, 'Dummy of the Gods') to do harm to Śākyamuni. Throughout early Buddhist literature, Devadatta is portrayed as a cousin of Śākyamuni and a competitor for the establishment of a religious community. Devadatta makes several attempts on Śākyamuni's life, so that this event could be interpreted as proof of the inability of evil forces to harm the [illegible] ing the wild self-nature that prevents one from attaining buddhahood. As Śākyamuni places his hand on the forehead of the elephant, he recites these verses:

'Do not elephant, strike the elephant (among men), for painful elephant, is the striking of the elephant (among men),
For there is no good bourn [birth], elephant, for a slayer of the elephant (among men) when he is hence beyond [has died].
Be not proud, be not wanton, for the wanton reach not a good bourn [birth];
Only that should you do by which you will reach a good bourn [birth].'

(*loc. cit.*)

By calling Śākyamuni an elephant, the poem directly equates the two and by doing so informs us that it is the raging beast (the wild elephant) within us that must be quelled. This metaphor is well known throughout Asian Buddhism, either the elephant or the monkey that represents the untrained mind of the practitioner.

Representations of the 'Taming' scene are not found in the earliest Buddhist carvings at Bodhgayā, Bhārhut or Sāñcī, yet the scene is known in early sculpture in a fully developed form in a relief (Fig. 9) from second-century Amarāvatī in the Kṛṣṇa River region. This visually dynamic scene illustrates the elephant twice, first using his trunk to swing some unfortunate person by one leg and the second time kneeling before the Buddha. In the cityscape, other figures flee or grab each other in terror while onlookers observe the scene from balconies and windows. The full and richly detailed narrative style of the Amarāvatī idiom conforms in detail to the full narrative in the *Cullavagga*, which describes the buildings and onlookers in some detail.

A later representation of the event (Fig. 10) occurs in the same fifth-century Sārnāth stele discussed above in relation to the 'Gift of the Monkey'. This scene shows an altogether different composition but one which remains essentially stable for the next six or seven centuries (see Figs 11 and 12). On the left, we see the kneeling elephant, in the centre, the Buddha with his right arm outstretched and, to the right, a figure of a monk (usually said to be Ānanda, who figures prominently in the narrative) carrying a mendicant's staff with a sistrum at the top (Sanskrit *khakkara*). The *stūpa* above the elephant may indicate that there was a *stūpa* somewhere in old Rājagṛha that commemorated the location of the event. Unfortunately, although there are traces of many *stūpas* in the area, we are unable to determine which one it might be. It is also possible that the *stūpa* symbolizes the *Dharma* by which Śākyamuni subdued the elephant.

A rare single image of the taming of the Nālāgiri (Fig. 11) from ancient Uddaṇḍapura (modern Bihār Sharīf in Bihar state), along with a surviving companion piece, was probably part of a set of the eight life scenes set into the sides of a *stūpa*. Moreover, the image is dated by inscription in the second or third year of Śūrapāla, which places it very close to the middle of the ninth century. In the sculpture, the Buddha

(Fig. 9) *Stūpa* slab from Amarāvatī showing the Taming of Nālāgiri
Late 2nd or early 3rd century
Madras Museum

(Fig. 10) Taming of Nālāgiri, on a stele of the eight life scenes
Sārnāth, 5th century
Sārnāth Museum

kneels in obeisance before him. A monk with a *khakkara* stands to the viewer's right, and a donor (no doubt the donor Cūḍa mentioned in the inscriptions) kneels just below the elephant in perpetual devotion to the Buddha. Examined closely, it will be seen that there are five lions emerging from the outstretched hand of the Buddha projecting towards the submissive elephant. These lions undoubtedly represent the Buddhist *Dharma* with which the Buddha tamed both the real and metaphoric Nālāgiri. (It should be noted that in the ninth to the twelfth century, the norm is five lions but one lion and no lions are also known.)

An extremely revealing painted representation in the 1165 manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (Fig. 12) cited above shows another puppy-like elephant but one that is portrayed in a kind of empirical 'multiple exposure'. He is shown both with his trunk raised as if in striking position and in the kneeling position simultaneously. The scene is set in a landscape, indicated by a palm tree with a bird in it, and the Buddha is accompanied by two monks.

Although early images of the Taming of Nālāgiri are lacking at Bodhgayā, Bhārhut and Sāñcī, there is a pillar face illustrating three of the other major *pīthas* of Rājagṛha on the north *toraṇa* at Sāñcī comparable to the Vaiśali cluster of scenes. The west face of the eastern pillar of the north *toraṇa* (the face opposite the Vaiśali set), has at the top worshippers in front of a cave set in a rocky landscape (Fig. 13). Below that is a king setting out in a chariot to see the Buddha (Fig. 14), and below that is a *pīṭha* in a bamboo grove (Fig. 15). Read from top to bottom, the reliefs show the Gṛdhrakūṭa ('Vulture Peak') caves, a re-enactment of the visit of King Bimbisāra to the Buddha and the *pīṭha* at the Karaṇḍa Veṇuvana ('Bamboo Grove of Baskets'), all at Rājagṛha. Thus, entering the gateway from the north, one passes between the *pīthas* of Vaiśali and Rājagṛha. In an aside, it must be noted that the other *toraṇas* of Sāñcī should probably be re-evaluated iconographically to determine if the pattern of showing the two pilgrimage sites is repeated. If so, then a major revision of the iconography of the *toraṇas* is in order.

As at Vaiśali and the Jetavana at Śrāvasti, Śākyamuni Buddha spent many seasons at the Magadhan city of Rājagṛha. For this writer, it is Rājagṛha and specifically the Gṛdhrakūṭa much more than any of the other holy sites of Buddhism that epitomize the presence of the Buddha. The Gṛdhrakūṭa (Fig. 16) is the most important of the several teaching *pīthas* at Rājagṛha, and is a small spur on the southern slope of Chaṭhā Hill, the most northeasternly of a ring of five hills around the ancient city. It is apparently so named because of an outcrop of rock that resembles the

open beak of a vulture (Fig. 17). However, Faxian tells another version of the naming of the peak:

> ...Thirty paces to the north-west there is another [cave], where Ānanda was sitting in meditation, when the deva Māra Piśuna [the Māra of lust] having assumed the form of a large vulture, took his place in front of the cavern, and frightened the disciple. Then Buddha, by his mysterious, supernatural power, made a cleft in the rock, introduced his hand, and stroked Ānanda's shoulder, so that his fear immediately passed away. The footprints of the bird and the cleft for (Buddha's) hand are still there, and hence comes the name of 'The Hill of the Vulture Cavern'. (James Legge, trans., *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms...*, p. 83)

There is a cleft in the rocks from the top of the peak down to what is generally believed to be the cave in which Ānanda stayed. However, there are ancient stairs, now mostly lost, in the cleft and it is hard to determine the age of the stairs or the relationship of the cleft to any place that Śākyamuni might have sat because the top of the peak is completely covered with later (mostly Gupta period, 320-500) construction.

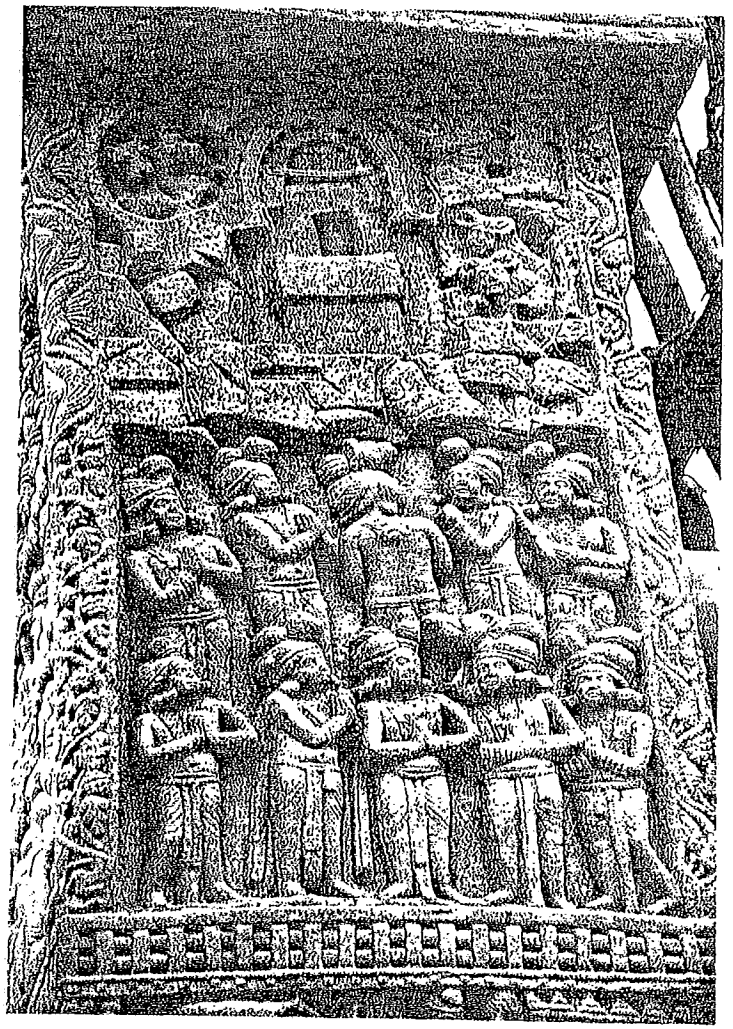
(Fig. 11) Taming of Nālāgiri,
Uddaṇḍapura (Bihār Sharīf), Bihar state,
mid 9th century
Indian Museum, Calcutta

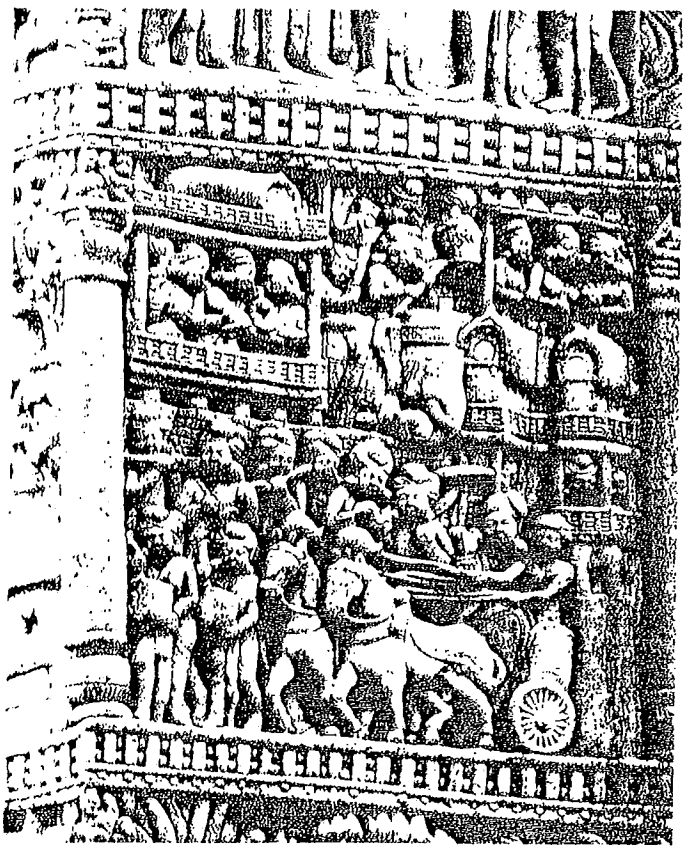
(Fig. 12) Taming of Nālāgiri, from an
Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra
manuscript, dated 1165
Bharat Kalā Bhavan, Vārānasī

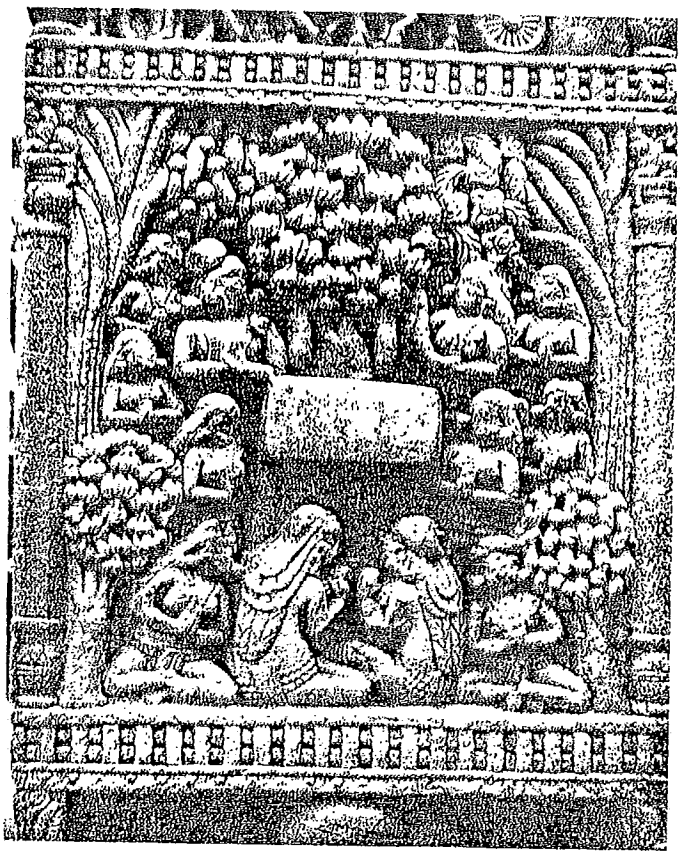
(Fig. 13) Worship at the Gṛdhrakūṭa *pīṭha*
Sāñci, Stūpa I, north *toraṇa*, east pillar, west face, *c.* BC 25-25 AD

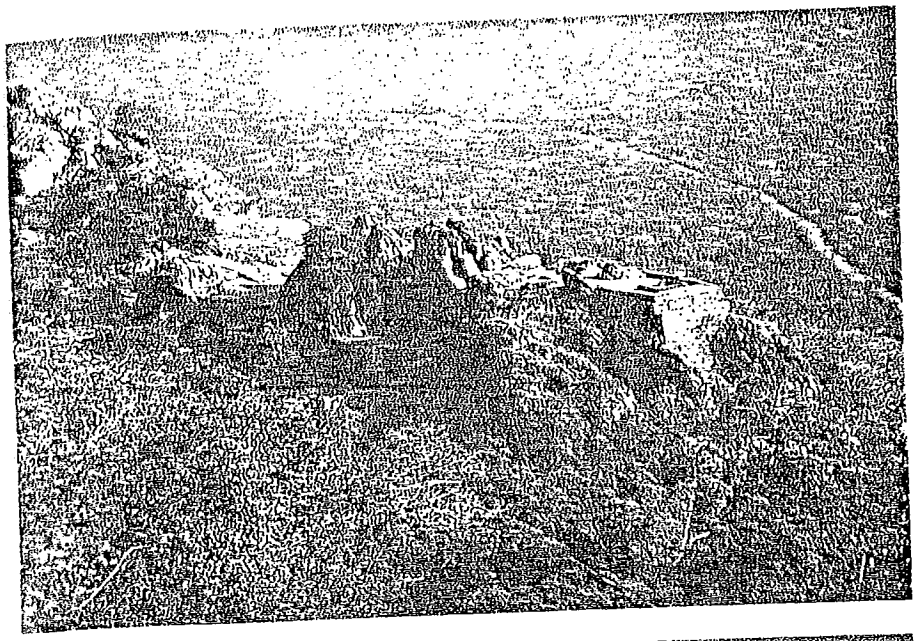
(Fig. 14) Re-enactment of King Bimbisāra setting out to visit the Buddha
Sāñci, Stūpa I, north *toraṇa*, east pillar, west face, *c.* BC 25-25 AD

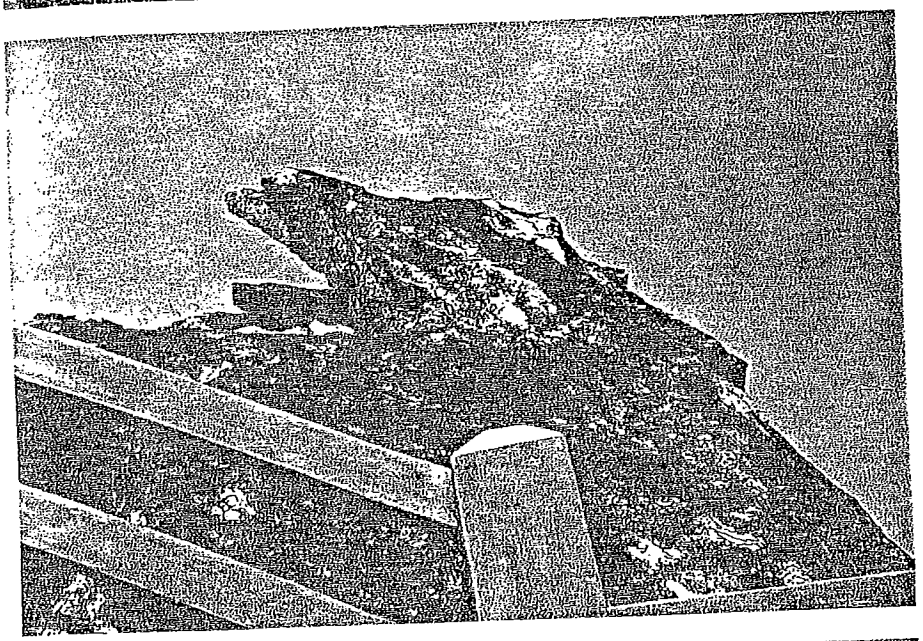
(Fig. 15) Worship at Veṇuvana
Sāñci, Stūpa I, north *toraṇa*, east pillar, west face, *c.* BC 25-25 AD

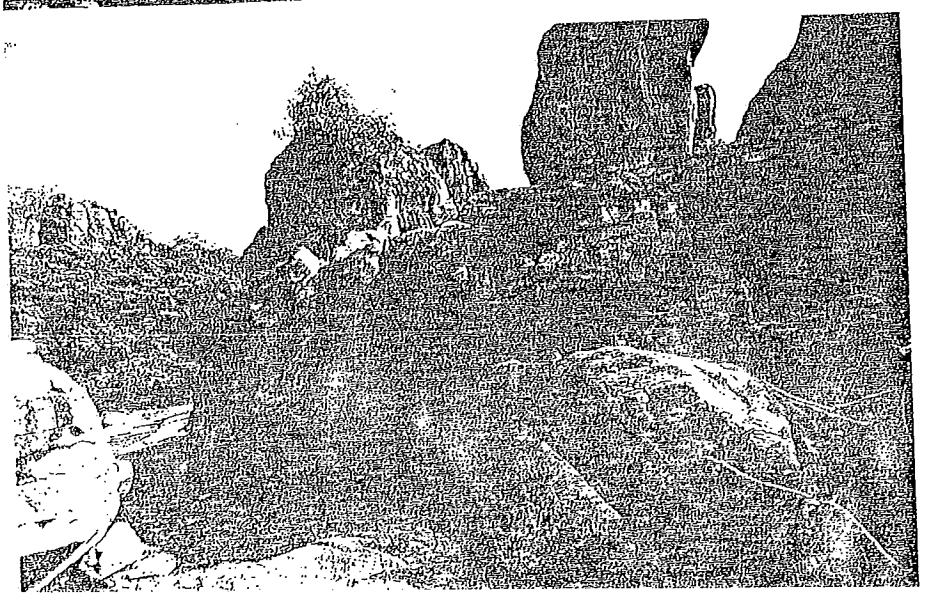












(Fig. 16) Gṛdhrakūṭa from the northwest (looking down from Chaṭhā Hill)

(Fig. 17) The 'vulture's beak' formation, Gṛdhrakūṭa

(Fig. 18) The 'Two Houses' caves, Gṛdhrakūṭa

Whatever the case of the naming of the peak, Śākyamuni and his disciples dwelled in natural caves near the summit of the peak (Fig. 18) and it is there that many teachings are believed to have been promulgated. In both Western and East Asian scholarship, the Gṛdhrakūṭa is most often cited as the place of the preaching of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, in spite of the fact that many important Theravāda tradition *sūtras* were taught there as well (e.g., the story of Vassakāra in the *Anguttara-nikāya*) and that many Mahāyāna tradition *sūtras* were taught at other locations. This modern 'generic' attribution of Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings to Gṛdhrakūṭa is probably because the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka-sūtra*) was taught there. In contrast to this view, which may be traced from Xuanzang's time since he mentions this *sūtra*, Faxian notes the emotion he felt when he visited the site of the teaching of *Śūraṅgama-Samādhi-sūtra*:

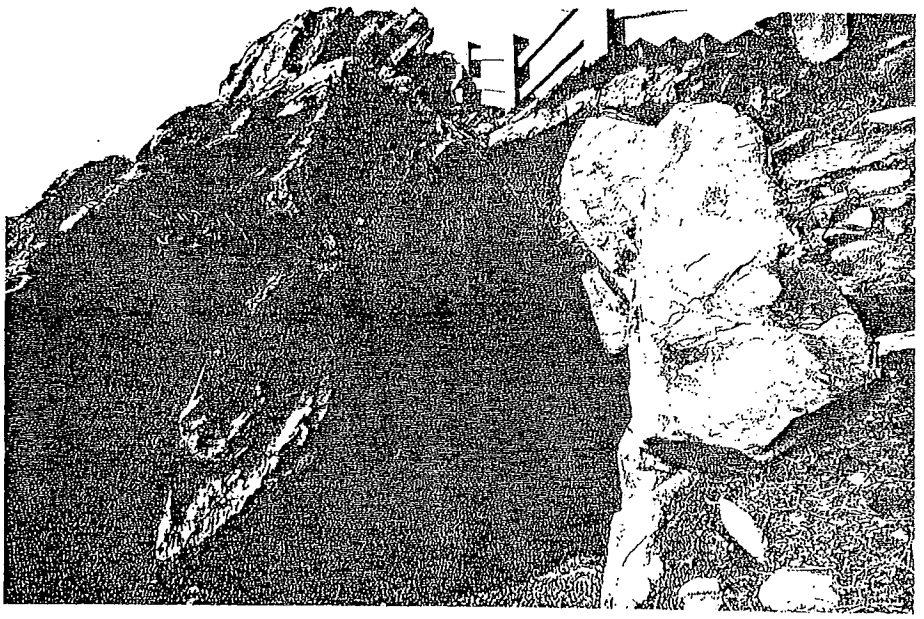
> In the New City Fâ-hien [Faxian] bought incense-(sticks), flowers, oil and lamps, and hired two *bhikshus*, long resident (at the place), to carry them (to the peak). When he himself got to it, he made his offerings with the flowers and incense, and lighted the lamps when darkness began to come on. He felt melancholy, but restrained his tears and said, 'Here Buddha delivered the *Śūraṅgama* (*Sūtra*). I, Fâ-hien, was born when I could not meet with Buddha; and now I only see the footprints which he has left, and the place where he lived, and nothing more.' With this, in front of the rock cavern, he chanted the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, remained there over the night, and then returned towards the New City. (*ibid*, pp. 83-8)

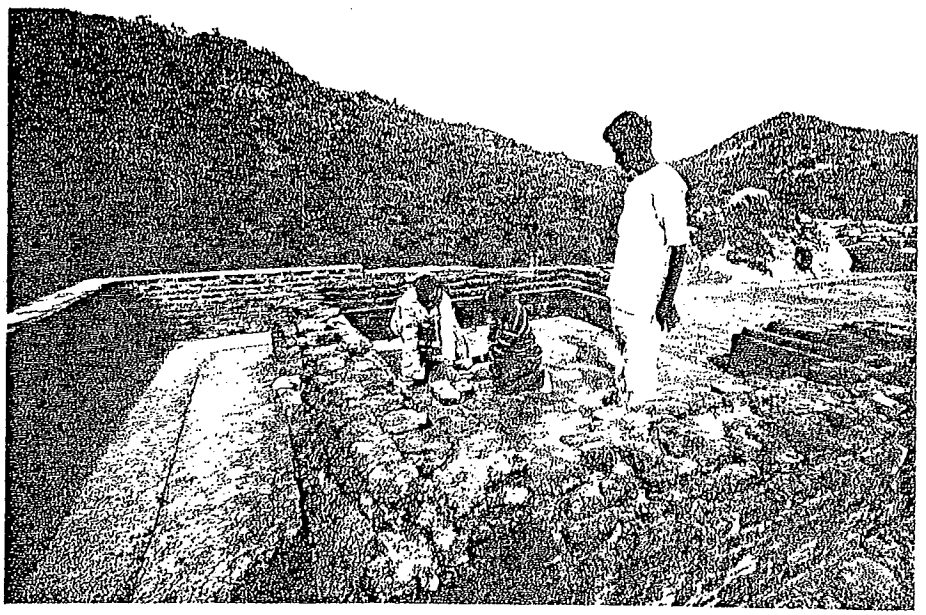
The point remains that the *sūtras* mentioned by each of the two Chinese pilgrims are both advanced Mahāyāna texts, apparently accounting to some extent for the only partially correct modern view of the site as the seat of Mahāyāna teachings. Xuanzang mentions that the Buddha taught the 'excellent law in its developed form'

(Fig. 19) 'Bimbisāra's road'

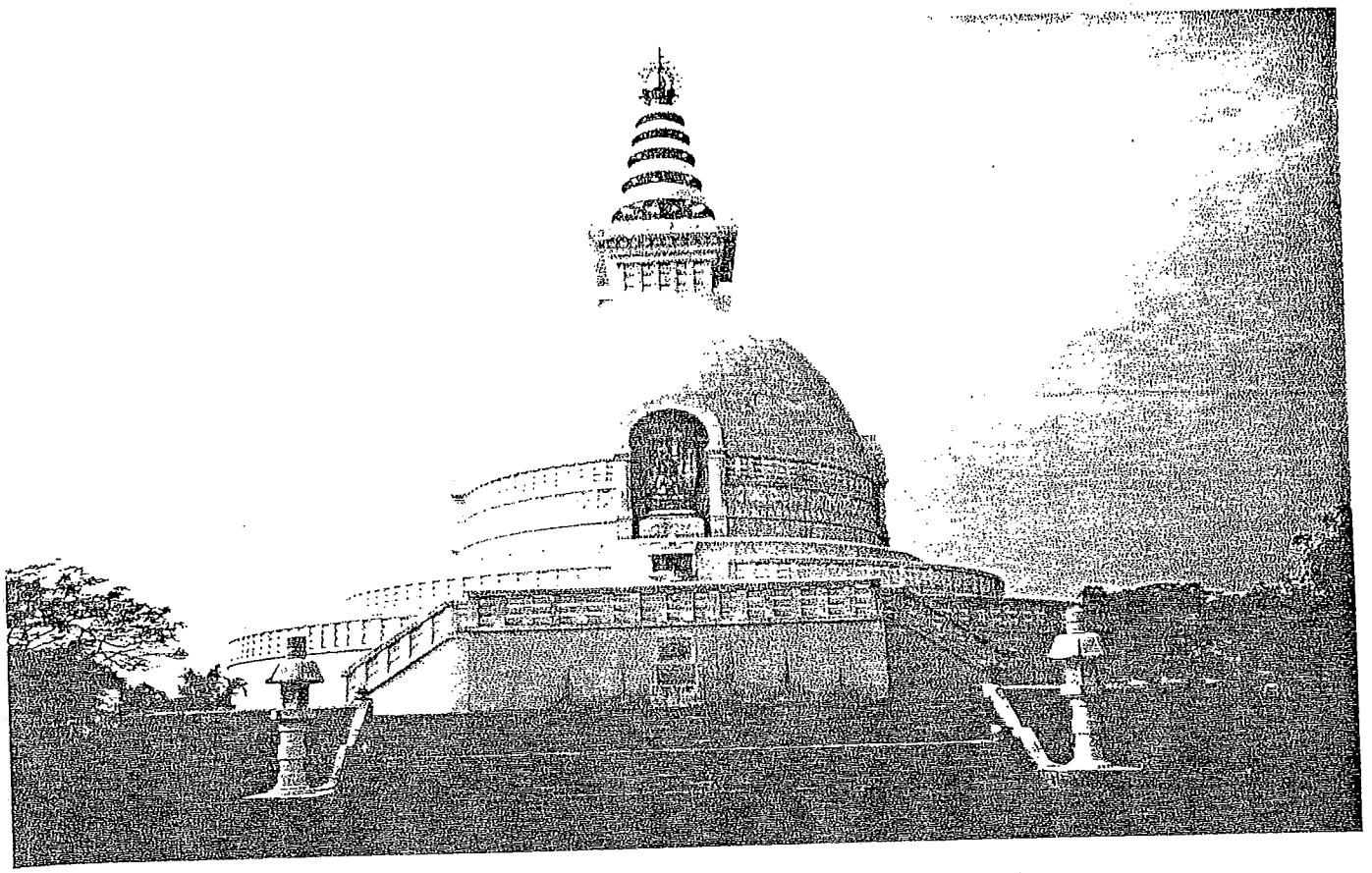
(Fig. 20) A cave (the Buddha's cave?) at the top of Gṛdhrakūṭa

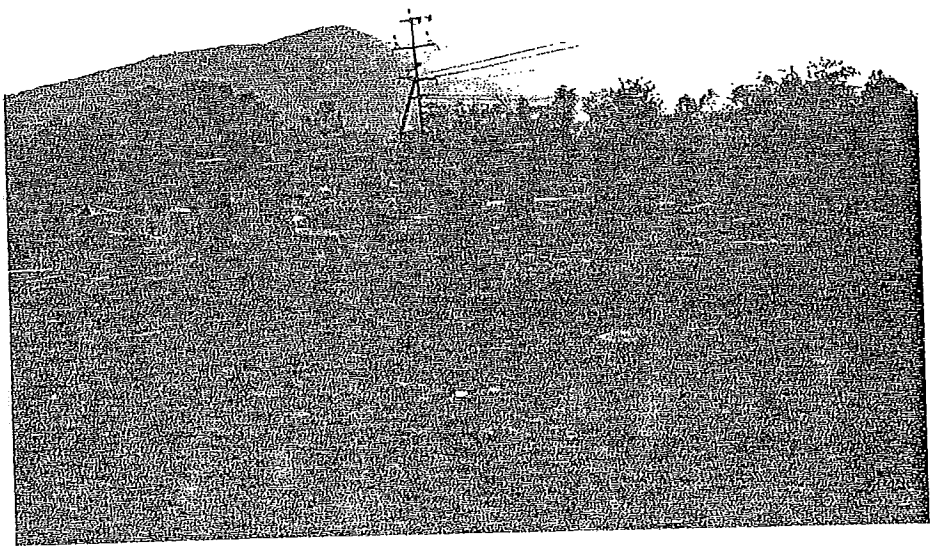
(Fig. 21) Shrine at the top of Gṛdhrakūṭa





regarding the earliness of the Mahāyāna Vaipulya class of *sūtras* notes, 'It is barely possible that the Buddha did in his later years declare a developed (mystical) form of his doctrine, and perhaps this mountain was the scene of his teaching; but the greater portion of the *sūtras* claiming the authority of his utterance here are fabulous' (*Buddhist Records of the Western World*, vol. 2, 1906, p. 153). There is a recent trend among some modern scholars, this author included, who see convincing evidence that many 'core' Mahāyāna ideals did indeed have an early origin and that they developed in a parallel manner to the Theravāda tradition. Mahāyāna Buddhism too closely resembles pre-Śākyamuni Upaniṣadic thinking and methodologies and emerges into the light of epigraphic and literary history too fully developed in the first century BC to have been an invention of the late second or first century BC. The chronological sequence and time of development problems are even worse regarding the late first- or early second-century AD 'emergence' of Mahāyāna as a few scholars have suggested. Accordingly, both the modern scholar and the modern practitioner may have more 'faith' in the preaching of, at least, the 'core' of Mahāyāna ideals by Śākyamuni. It is becoming apparent that the attribution of 'lateness' to Mahāyāna texts resulted from the phenomenon encountered in the very early Mahāyāna tradition of regarding one's own teacher as a buddha. This would have allowed the continual 'expansion' of the Mahāyāna literature during the tenure of each generation of teachers and would have given rise to various 'schools' of Mahāyāna texts. Essentially, all teachings, whether those of Śākyamuni or of subsequent teachers, were to be seen as the actual teachings of a buddha. This would have naturally led to confusion over distinctions as to sources and the sequence of exegetical statements integrated into the body of a text.





(Fig. 22) Japanese *stūpa*, Chaṭhā Hill

(Fig. 23) Japanese style image of the Buddha in the east niche of the *stūpa*, Chaṭhā Hill

(Fig. 24) *Stūpa* built by Ajātaśatru to contain the Magadhan portion of the relics of Śākyamuni, Rājagṛha

One approaches the Gṛdhrakūṭa from the southwest of the hill along a pathway known as Bimbisāra's road (Fig. 19). Although the surface of the road is largely a modern restoration for the convenience of pilgrims to the site, its foundations are legitimate early stone work and the road would appear to date from the time of Śākyamuni Buddha. If that is the case, the road at Rājagṛha/Gṛdhrakūṭa is directly to Śākyamuni's ministry. It is best described by Xuanzang:

Bimbisāra-rāja, for the purpose of hearing the law, raised a number of men to accompany him from the foot of the mountain to its summit. They levelled the valleys and spanned the precipices, and with the stones made a staircase about ten paces wide and 5 or 6 *li* long. In the middle of the road there are two *stūpas*, one called 'Dismounting from the chariot,' because the

crowd' because the king, separating the common folk, would not allow them to proceed with him. (Beal, *op. cit.*, p. 153)

The long walk up the hill must be taken slowly especially if the day is hot (one should be sure to carry water). There is a tempting chairlift up to Chaṭhā Hill for those who might wish to take it, but it does not go to the Gṛdhrakūṭa directly (there is still a long walk from Chaṭhā Hill to Gṛdhrakūṭa and the lift is often shut down for repairs anyway). However, the history of the place comes far more alive by walking the ancient road and through the trails of the hills than by riding the chairlift to the modern temple and *stūpa* overlooking Gṛdhrakūṭa from Chaṭhā Hill.

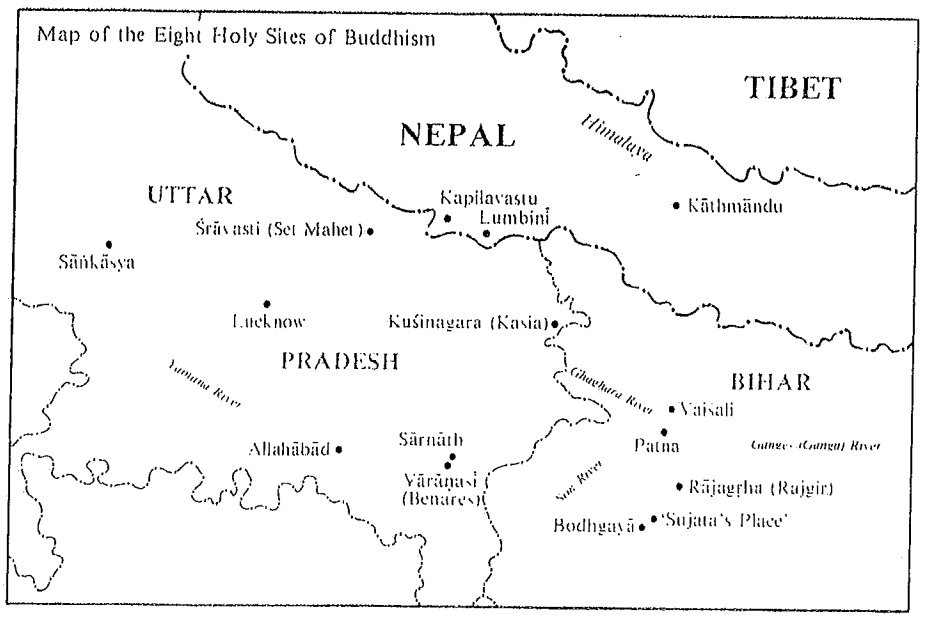
As one passes the 'Dismounting the Chariot' *stūpa* and turns off to the right fork in the trail to the Gṛdhrakūṭa spur, there is a real sense of timelessness and anticipation of things past. The road is the one used in the time of the Buddha, the rocks were there when he lived, and even the direct descendants of the fauna from his time dart about on the hill. For much of the way, there is nothing to break the feeling that one could be approaching the potentially still active residing place of Śākyamuni Buddha. Even as one approaches the summit, passes the caves known as the 'Two Houses' and circles to the right around the peak itself, passing yet another cave where it is possible the Buddha himself sat in meditation (Fig. 20), there is no break in the mood of travelling in the past. Only the garish pink stair railing installed by the Archaeological Survey of India (seen in part in Fig. 17) shatters the mood as one makes the final ascent to the platform at the top of Gṛdhrakūṭa. There, at the summit, are two small temple basements of Gupta period bricks — remnants of history's tribute to the great teacher who once sat there. At the westernmost of these, the visitor may offer his flower garlands at the tiny brick altar, just as Xuanzang once did before a life-size image of the preaching Buddha, and partake of his own meditations (Fig. 21).

Descending from the Gṛdhrakūṭa, and returning to the fork in the trail, one should visit the modern Japanese *stūpas* on Chaṭhā Hill. (While walking the visitor must be cautious not to be touted by a less-than-energetic guide into taking a 'short cut' to the new *stūpa*, thus omitting the Gṛdhrakūṭa which, after all, is the most important location in the area.) The *stūpa* is maintained by a group of Japanese Buddhists who subsidize monks and nuns to live there and to make daily offerings at the site of the teachings. The chants and drums of the monks and nuns may often be heard. In one way, it is appropriate that it is the followers from a nation that constitutes one of the traditional 'furthest reaches' of the Buddha's *Dharma* who return to the centre, symbolically encompassing all Buddhist lands in between in their offering. Designed along traditional lines, indeed copying freely from Stūpa I at Sāñcī, the brilliant white marble *aṇḍa* (dome) of the *stūpa* demonstrates, in a general way, how many of the great *stūpas* of the past looked (Fig. 22). Yet when one approaches the *stūpa* to circumambulate it, the classical Japanese style captured in the modern images is self evident (Fig. 23). Here, on a now desolate peak in central Bihar overlooking the traditional location of the promulgation of many major *sūtras* is a profound and very moving expression of the continuation of the faith.

Descending to the floor of the valley and following a reputable guide or using the Archaeological Survey of India's guidebook, *Rajgir*, one may find the way to the Jīvakāmravana, the monestary given by King Bimbisāra to the Buddha, to a series of low foundations of the old city amid which may be found the pit known as Bimbisāra's Jail where the king was imprisoned by his usurper son, Ajātaśatru. Outside the north side entrance to the valley is the 'New City' of Rājagṛha built by Ajātaśatru. There one may find the hot springs in which Ānanda bathed, and, immediately adjacent to them, the Veṇuvana or Bamboo Grove where many *sūtras* were expounded by the Buddha.

Despite bad beginnings and having been a supporter of the Buddha's cousin Devadatta, Ajātaśatru was converted by the Buddha and, in the later life of Śākyamuni, one of his staunchest supporters. After the Buddha's death at Kuśinagara, the Magadhans under Ajātaśatru received a portion of the Buddha's relics and built a *stūpa* to the immediate west of the 'new' city. Although it is now in ruins (Fig. 24) and seems never to have had early stone railings like those at Bhārhut and Sāñcī, it is one of the presumably accurately identified Eight Great *Stūpas* (*Aṣṭamahāstūpa*) of the Buddha.

Until very recently, the Rājgir (ancient Rājagṛha) area has welcomed only the most intrepid. However, with the advent of a modern hotel in the immediate area, there is not only easy access but considerable comfort as well. The Rājgir area (and adjacent Bodhgayā) are among the most important and holiest sites of Buddhism and no one visiting Bihar should omit them.



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Dharma
September 1986, 46-58

Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus

A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage Sites of Buddhism, Part V

John C. Huntington

Kuśinagara

In his seventy-ninth year, Śākyamuni began his last journey to the north. He travelled from Rājagṛha through the towns Ambalaṭṭhikā, Nālandā, Pāṭaligāma (Pāṭaliputra of the Mauryan period, *c.* 321-185 BC, and modern Patna), from where he crossed, by miraculous power, the Ganges River, which was then in spate. North of the river, he then travelled to the villages of Koṭigāma and Nādika and finally to Vaiśali where he stayed at the Ambapālī grove. In each of these places, he met with local monks, offered teachings to them and received meals at the hands of the local laity. Subsequently, he moved to nearby Beluva where he resided for the rainy season, during which he was taken ill. It is at Beluva that he delivered his famous 'be lamps unto yourselves' sermon. In answer to Ānanda's request for instructions concerning the order in the event of Śākyamuni's death, the Buddha said:

> ...O Ānanda, [I] am now grown old, and full of years, my journey is drawing to its close, I have reached the sum of my days, I am turning eighty years of age;...It is only, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata, ceasing to attend to any outward thing, or to experience any sensation, becomes plunged in that devout meditation of heart[/mind] which is concerned with no material object — it is only then that the body of the Tathagāta is at ease.
>
> Therefore, Ānanda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. (T.W. Rhys Davids, trans., *Mahā-parinibbāna Suttana*, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XI, pp. 37-38.)

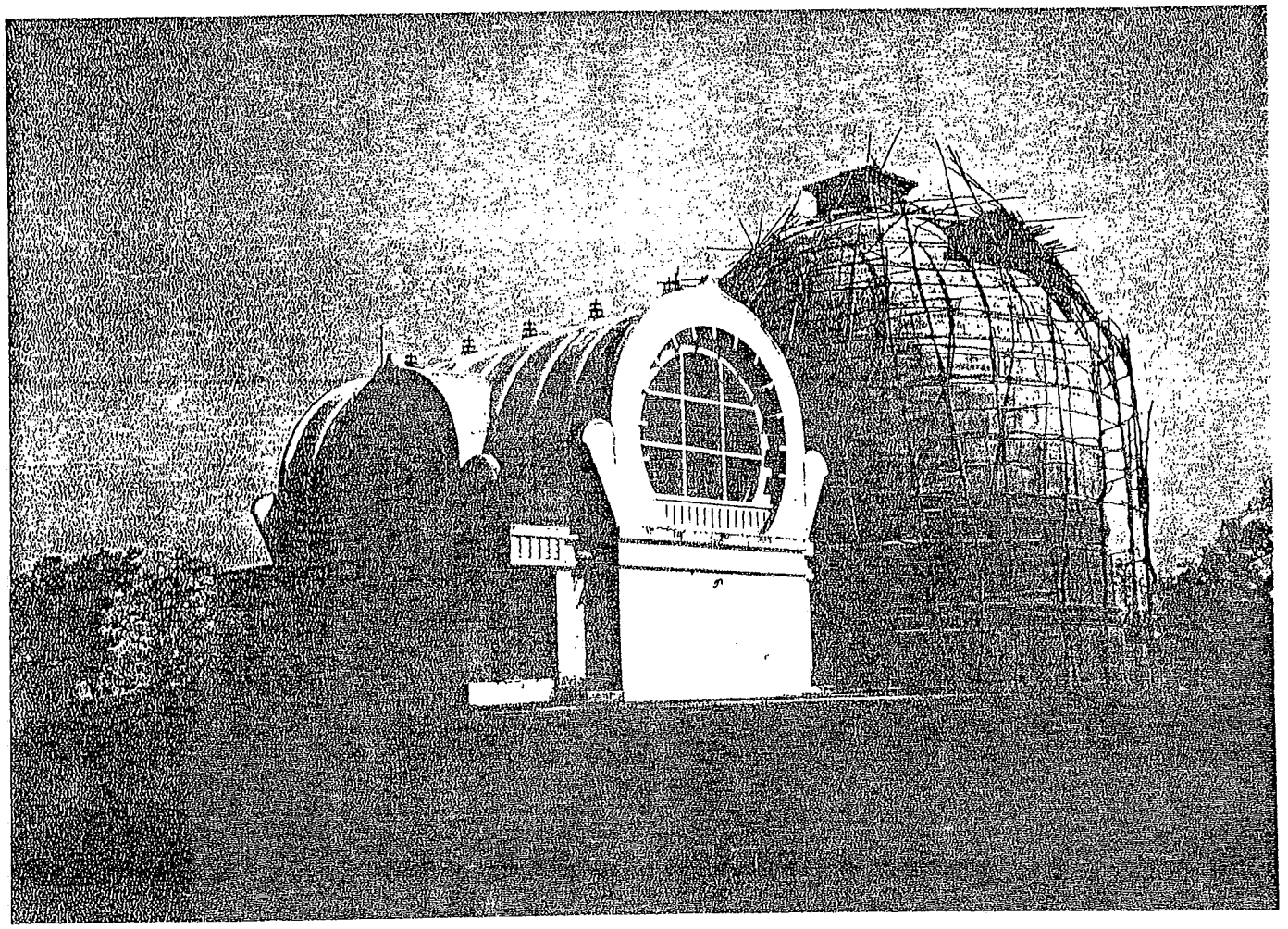
With these words, the Buddha set the stage for both his upcoming death and the doctrinal diversity that is now what we know as Buddhism. By designating no heir apparent for the leadership of the community (*saṅgha*), Śākyamuni opened the way for many leaders, and thus for schism and dispute, but more importantly, for vigorous growth and development, so much that the essential teachings of the Buddha could ultimately reach more than half of the population of the world.

According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, Śākyamuni remained in the Vaiśali/Beluva area for three months. He then resumed his journey north and west towards either Śrāvasti or Kapilavastu. The party travelled to Bhaṇḍagāma, Bhoga-nagara and on to Pāvā, where they spent the night in the mango grove of Cunda, a metalworker. Cunda invited the Buddha and his followers for a meal the next day. Śākyamuni accepted and Cunda spent the night preparing a feast that included dried boar meat. On arriving at the time of the feast, the Buddha said, 'As to the dried boar's flesh you have made ready, serve me with it; and as to the other food, the sweet rice and cakes, serve the brethren with it' (Ibid., p. 71). Immediately after eating the flesh, Śākyamuni fell violently ill but shortly thereafter insisted that the brethren begin their journey to Kuśinagara.

Reaching in several stages the vicinity of Kuśinagara, they proceeded to the *śāla* grove of the Mallas known as the Upavattana of Kuśinagara where the Buddha asked that Ānanda spread a couch for him with its head towards the north between twin *śāla* trees, 'and the Blessed One laid himself down on his right side, with one leg resting on the other.' (Ibid., p. 86) After meeting the Mallas of Kuśinagara and offering some final instructions to the brethren, Śākyamuni Buddha died.

> When the Blessed One died, the venerable Ānanda, at the moment of his passing away, uttered this stanza:
>
> 'Then was there terror!
> Then stood the hair on end!
> When he endowed with every grace —
> The supreme Buddha — died!'
>
> When the Blessed One died, of the brethren who were not yet free from the passions, some stretched out their arms and wept, and some fell headlong on the ground, rolling to and fro in anguish at the thought:
>
> 'Too soon has the Blessed One died!
> Too soon has the Happy One passed away from existence!
> Too soon has the Light gone out in the World!'
>
> But those brethren who were free from the passions (the Arhats) bore their grief collected and composed at the thought:
>
> 'Impermanent are all component things!
> How is it possible that [they should not be dissolved]?'
>
> (Ibid., pp. 118-19)

Who among his followers could have conceived of such a time when the Buddha would no longer be with them? At once the symbol of great mourning and of the ultimate release, the *stūpa* of the Mallas at Kuśinagara along with the *stūpa* of the cremation at Rāmabhār, about one kilometre to the east, mark both the death of the great teacher and the final realization of the release that his teachings promised. Technically, death of the corporeal body *per se* is insignificant to the Buddhists. Life and death are part of an endless cycle of existence that progresses from the infinite past and stretches on into the infinite future. 'As many lives as the grains of sand on the banks of one hundred million *nyutis* of *kotis* of Ganges Rivers' are



(Fig. 1) Nirvāṇa temples and the *stūpa* containing the Mallas of Kuśinagara's portion of the relics of Śākyamuni Kuśinagara

the death of the Buddha was very different; because of his realizations and the attainment of enlightenment, he was no longer subject to transmigration through endless births and deaths. His lives of suffering (*duḥkha*) had come to the final end.

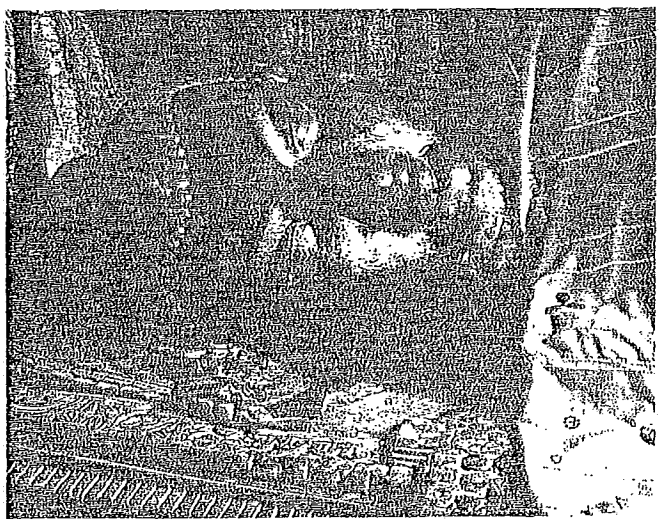
Those who had not attained their own release from desire would see the death as a great and tragic loss. Others, whose attainment was more completely accomplished would realize that this was the demonstration of the Buddhist promise to them — the demonstration of the release that came from joining the 'Āryan Kingdom' (see Part III*) and following the way of the Buddha (*Buddhamārga*) to its logical conclusion. For those who had attained their own release (the Arhats), everything was as it should be and there was no remorse and no joy — only the need to minister to others less fortunate than themselves in terms of their attainment.

The modern town of Kasia in eastern Uttar Pradesh is the site of ancient Kuśinagara, the location of the Great Decease (*Mahāparinirvāṇa*) of Śākyamuni Buddha. It is reachable only by bus or automobile from Gorakhpur. Unfortunately, although it appears on maps to be a convenient route, one should not attempt to travel National Highway 28 between Kasia and northern Bihar. The road east from Kasia may be the worst stretch of national highway in India, and, even at its best, is very unpleasant and more than a little dangerous to travel. (If, for some reason one feels the need to travel it, a jeep or a Land Rover is advised, allowing plenty of time — about twelve hours between Kasia and Patna! — and one should be sure to check locally to see if the road is passable.)

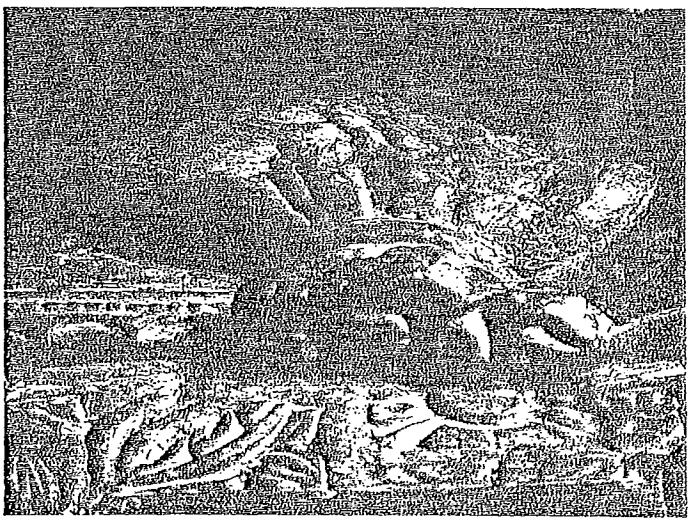
Just to the southwest of the modern town of Kasia, the remains of a large monastery have been partially uncovered. At present, it contains the modern Temple of the Nirvāṇa and, at the date of this author's recent visit, a restoration in progress on the Kuśinagara *stūpa* (Fig. 1). At the time of its excavation in the 1876-77 season, the main feature at the monastery was the large *stūpa* and an unusual temple foundation containing the fractured remnants of a huge reclining image (6.1 metres long) of Śākyamuni, which had been much repaired with plaster. Upon excavation, the base or plinth of the Buddha image was found to contain much of the rest of the image, and the excavator, A.C.L. Carlleyle

*Part I (*Orientations*, November 1985, pp. 46-61) discusses Aśoka's archetypal pilgrimage, Lumbinī and Kapilavastu, and Bodhgayā and its environs; Part II (February 1986, pp. 28-43), the Ṛṣipatana Mṛgadavā (Vārāṇasī and Sārnāth); Part III (March 1986, pp. 32-46), Śrāvasti and the Jetavana Monastery, and Sāṅkāsya; and Part IV (July 1986, pp. 28-40), Vaiśali and Rājagṛha.

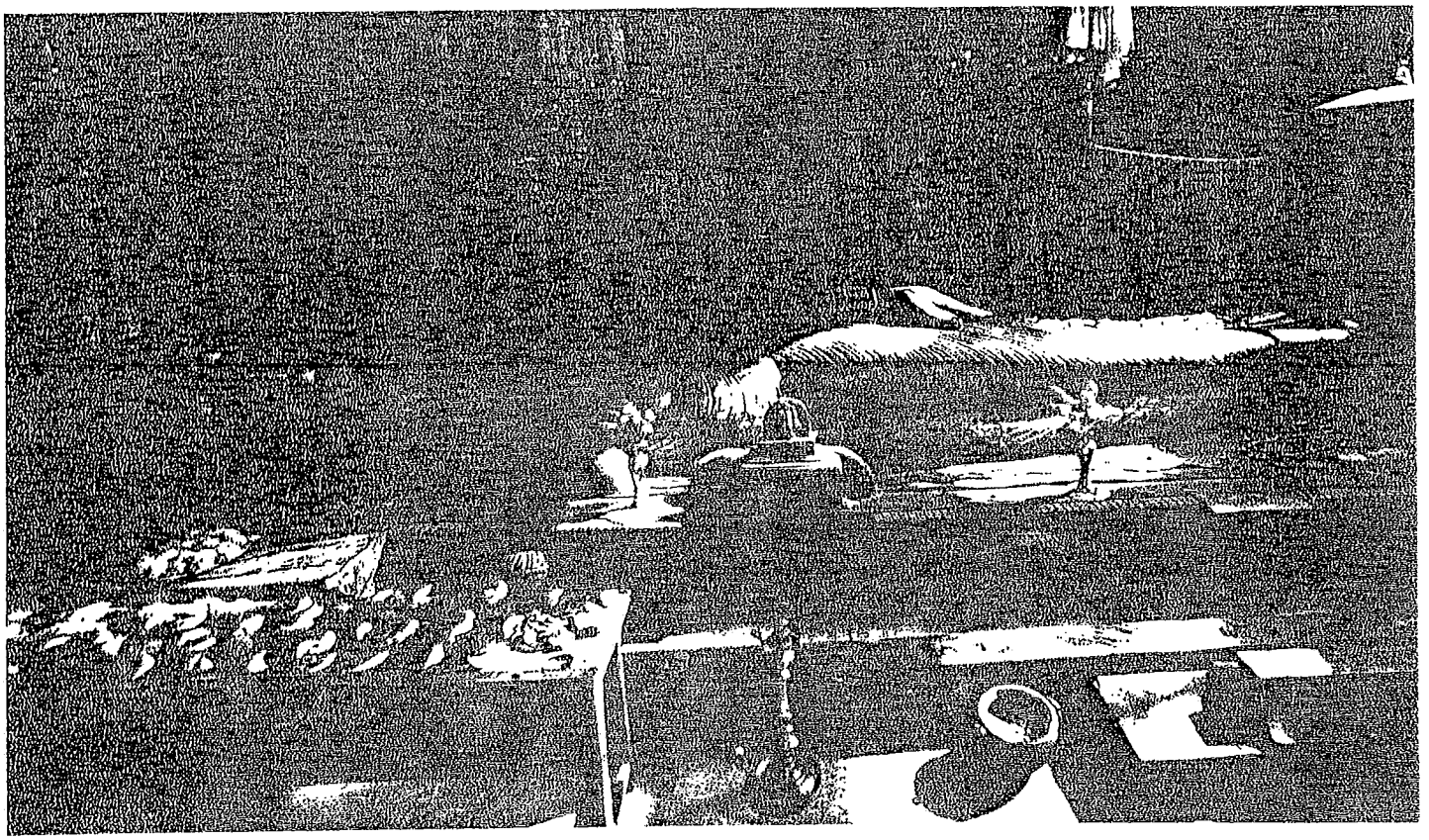
(Fig. 2) *Parinirvāṇa* image inside the Nirvāṇa Temple
5th century
Kuśinagara



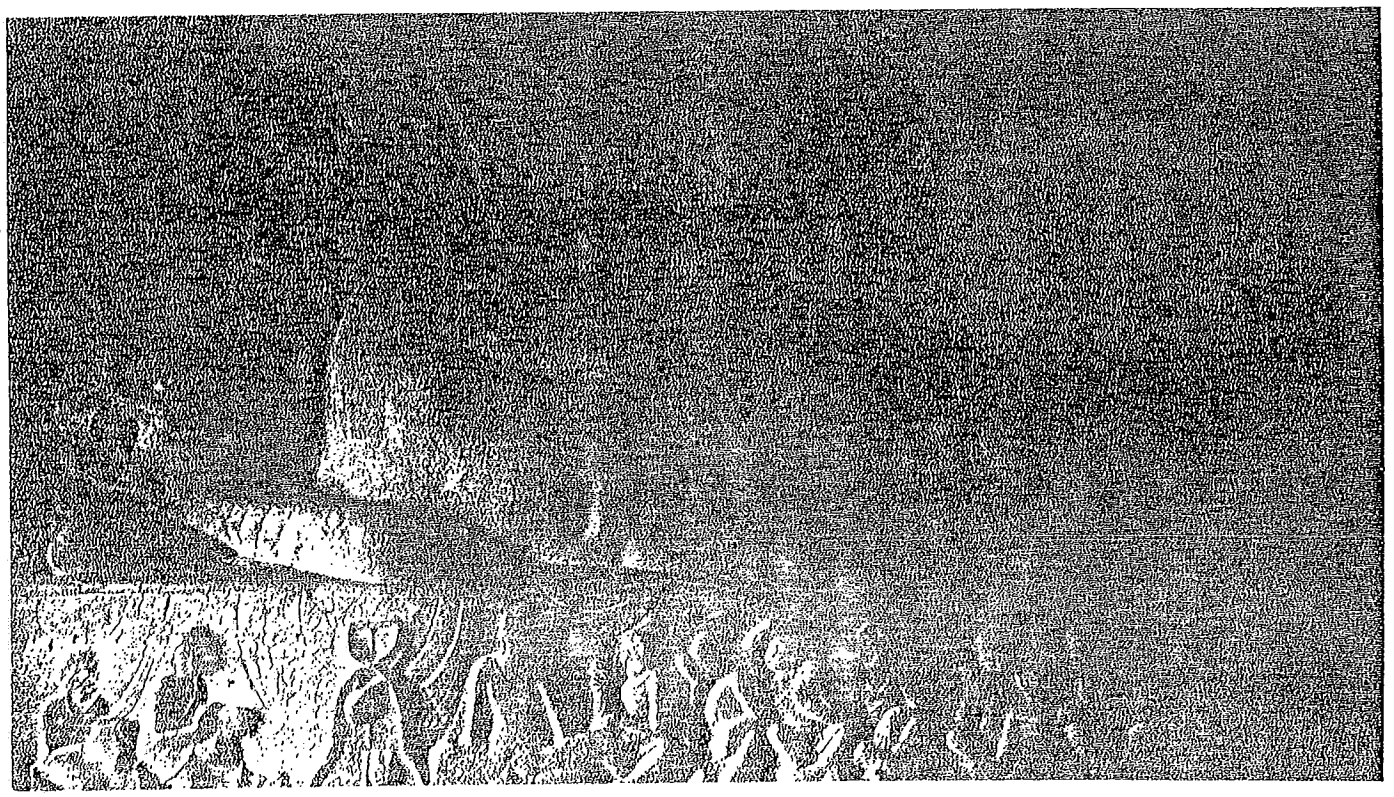
(Fig. 3) Detail of Figure 2



(Fig. 4) Detail of Figure 2



(Fig. 5) Image of Figure 2 without covering



(Fig. 6) *Parinirvāṇa* image
Ajaṇṭā, Cave 26, end 5th century

(Alexander Cunningham's assistant) was able to reassemble most of the image (Figs 2-5). Inscribed with the reign of the monarch under whom it was dedicated (Kumāragupta, r. 413-55) and the name of the donor (Haribala), it is remarkable that the image has not figured more prominently in the study of Indian art. Most art historians who make note of it question its condition as being too much restored. Whatever its condition, it is one of the earliest *bṛhad* ('great', in size) Buddha images surviving and is clearly the prototype for the magnificent late fifth-century image of the *Parinirvāṇa* in Cave 26 at Ajaṇṭā (Fig. 6).

Although reported by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (who travelled to India 629-45), a Mauryan pillar commemorating the *Nirvāṇa* and other Mauryan period remains have yet to be definitely identified at the site. It seems that the plinth on which both the *stūpa* and the Temple of the Nirvāṇa are located has not been excavated below the late Gupta (AD 320-500) levels. Thus, it is possible that the remains could be under the surviving plinth, but, so far as this author is aware, no effort had been made to determine this. The present temple (Fig. 1) is a fanciful 1956 replacement, with gable ends based on the famous Viśvakarma Temple (Cave 10) at Ellora. It replaces an even more imaginary reconstruction by Carlleyle that he designed based on the fact that he found some bricks with curved surfaces leading him to assume that the 'original' (perhaps as late as the eleventh or twelfth century) structure had a vaulted roof.

As one enters the modern temple, the visitor is confronted with a huge shrouded image of the Buddha reclining in front of him. Shafts of light from the south window move slowly across the room highlighting elements of the image as they progress. The image has been recently gilded and, due to somewhat puzzling restrictions by a resident Mahābodhi Society monk, the cover is seldom removed for concerned visitors (Fig. 5). The figure is closely related to fifth-century sculpture of the Mathurā area and, according to the excavators, is even made of the same dark reddish sandstone that is characteristic of the Mathurā school. On this basis, it seems appropriate to form at least a working hypothesis that the image was a product of the Mathurā school and was imported to the site at the time of its installation.

In comparison with other images of the *Parinirvāṇa*, whether at Dunhuang in Gansu province, China, or in Sri Lanka, where the two sub-types of this image convention are very common, the sense of this being the actual spot of the *Parinirvāṇa* overwhelms any historical or archaeological concerns that one might have. To the best of human knowledge, it is at this very spot that the great teacher ended his many mortal existences and reintegrated, much as a drop of water reunites with the oceans of the world, into the fulfilled state of undifferentiated potential (*nirvāṇa*). To be present in the temple, even though one's thoughts are punctuated by groups of visiting school children and chatting tourists with little or no Buddhist interests, is still to experience and receive *darśana* (see Part I) of the great event.

Early representations of the *Parinirvāṇa* at such places as Bodhgayā, Bhārhut and Sāñcī (in spite of Foucher's opinion about certain reliefs at the Sāñcī site) are lacking. This is probably because the *stūpas* at these sites were the symbol *par excellence* of the *Parinirvāṇa*. Not only does the *stūpa* symbolize the ultimate attainment, but, as Lewis R. Lancaster has pointed out, in virtually all early *stūpas*, the Buddha himself was physically present in the casket of relics. This accounts for the depiction of numerous scenes of *stūpa* worship at all of the early sites. Apparently, the existence of a *stūpa* at Kuśinagara was enough for the devotees, for there are no records to even suggest if there was any kind of early sculptural commemoration at the site.

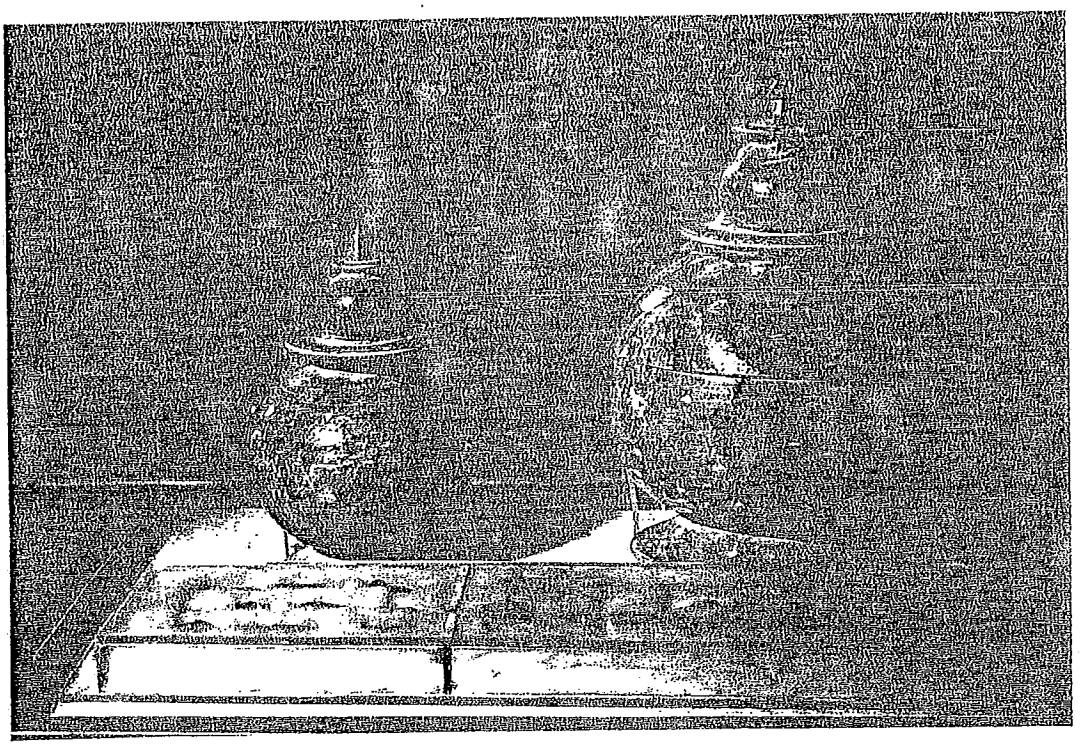
As just one example of the many representations of the *Parinirvāṇa*, the spectacular image (Fig. 6) found in Cave 26 at Ajaṇṭā is both a prime example and demonstration of the already fully developed tradition. Carved in the left side wall of the ambulatory and blocked in by pillars, the placement of the image forces the viewer into close proximity, and an almost confrontational experience, with the image. Subhadra, the Buddha's last convert, who had not developed enough faith to be overly concerned, sits with his back to the viewer in quiet contemplation of an event he does not fully comprehend, while grieving mourners surround the image. The other figures are not readily identifiable although Ānanda, Anuruddha and Upāvaṇa appear by name in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* narrative of the events. It is with surrogates of the Kuśinagara images such as the one at Ajaṇṭā, that the faithful throughout the Buddhist world have been able to experience both the deep sense of loss and the promise of the ultimate salvation represented by the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, the last of the *Mahāprātihārya* (Great Miracles) of Śākyamuni Buddha.

> [Just prior to the Buddha's death, Ānanda asked], 'What are we to do, Lord, with the remains of the Tathāgata?'
>
> 'Hinder not yourselves [the monks], Ānanda, by honouring the remains of the Tathāgata. Be zealous, I beseech you, Ānanda, in your own behalf! Devote yourselves to your own good! Be earnest, be zealous, be intent on your own good! There are wise men, Ānanda, among the nobles, among the Brāhmans, among the heads of houses, who are firm believers in the Tathāgata; and they will do honour to the remains of the Tathāgata.' (Ibid., p. 91)

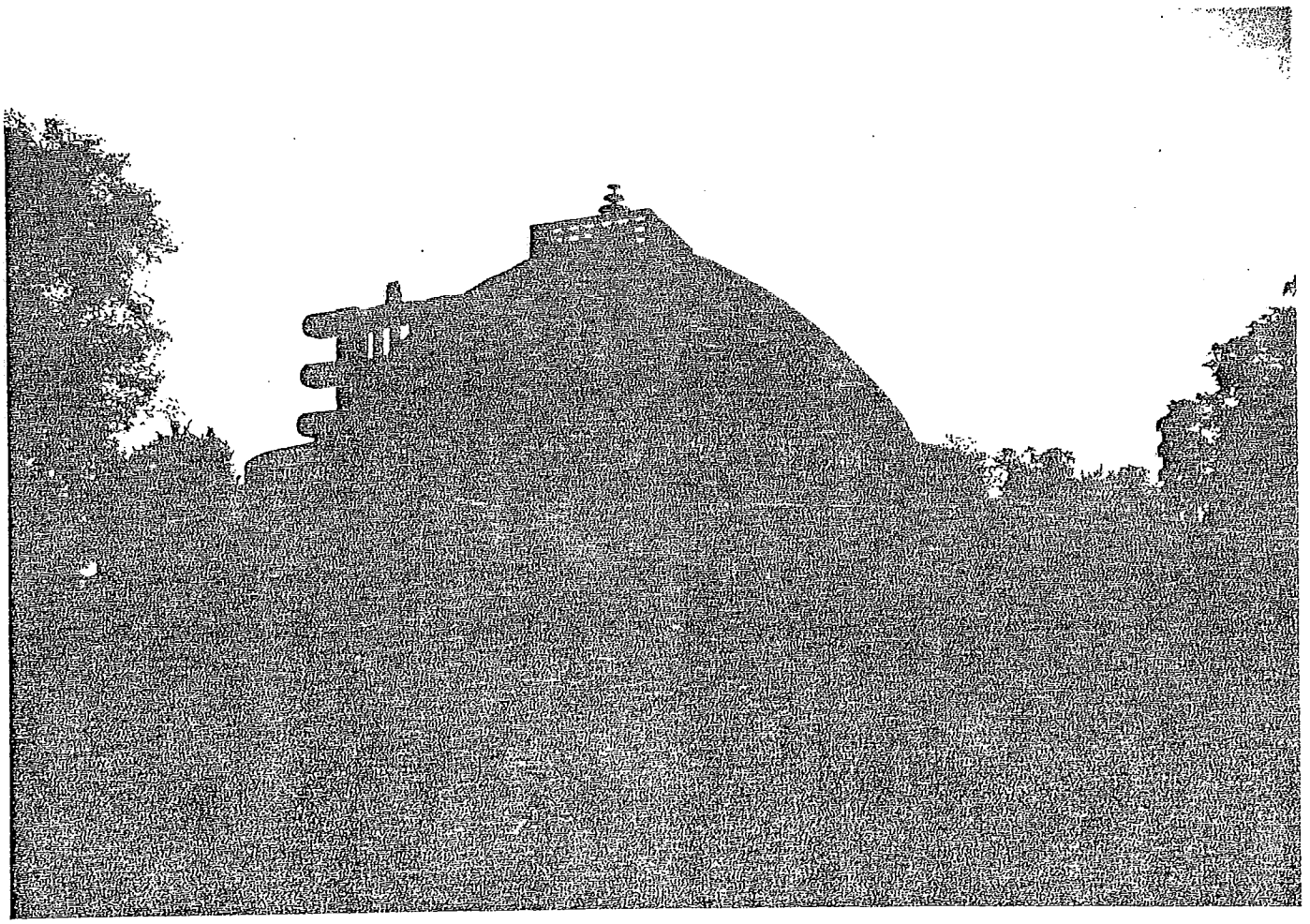
With these words, in a virtually universally overlooked passage, the Buddha made the act of devotion to his remains not an aspect of monkly activities but one placed in the realm of the lay devotees. The implications of this passage for Buddhist faith (*śraddhā*) practices and for the history of art connected with them cannot be overestimated. This notification from a primary canonical source states unequivocably that the cult of relics and, by obvious extension, the *stūpas* housing them, are the provenance of the lay devotees and that the monks should not concern themselves with the relics. This means that all of the great *stūpas*, especially the early ones, must be studied primarily in the light of lay devotional practices and as the *loci* of lay faith. This limits both the necessary approaches and even the body of canonical and commentarial literature that applies to them. Moreover, it opens the door for interpretations of their iconography as related to lay concerns and it raises the important question as to when the *stūpa* became part of the technical vocabulary of the *saṅgha*. Clearly, it did and has remained so to the present. Like virtually everything else in Buddhism, the *stūpa* has several layers of meaning and they are for each to interpret

(Fig. 7) Cremation *stūpa*
Rāmabhār

(Fig. 8) War of the relics
Sāñcī, Stūpa I, south *toraṇa*, north face,
lower architrave, 25 BC-AD 25



(Fig. 9) Caskets with relics of
Śākyamuni recovered from the Śākyan *stūpa*
at Piprahwa
National Museum, New Delhi



according to his or her own ability and understanding.

'What should be done, Lord, with the remains of the Tathāgata?'

'As men treat the remains of a king of kings, so Ānanda, they should treat the remains of a Tathāgata.

...'They wrap the body of a king of kings, Ānanda, in a new cloth...Then they place the body in an oil vessel of iron, and cover that close up with another oil vessel of iron. They then build a funeral pile of all kinds of perfumes and burn the body of the king of kings. And then at the four crossroads they erect a *dāgaba* [*stūpa*] to the king of kings.

...'And whosoever shall there place garlands or perfumes or paint, or make salutation there, or become in its presence calm in heart[/mind] — that shall long be for them a profit and a joy.' (Ibid., pp. 92-93)

According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the day after the death of Śākyamuni, Ānanda went into Kuśinagara, and told the Mallas to do with the body whatever they deemed proper. They first paid homage (*pūja*) to the body with music, dancing, hymns, garlands and perfumes and by hanging wreaths and canopies. At the end of this offering, it was decided that it was too late to have the cremation that day so they postponed it until the next day. However, for a total of seven days, they continued to do homage and not to perform the cremation. The body was finally moved to the shrine of Makuṭa-bandhana, the Mallas' tutelary deity, that was to the east of the city. At that time, they asked Ānanda how to treat the body of the Tathāgata and he essentially repeated the quote given above to them. Accordingly, they wrapped the body and placed it in a casket of iron. Word reached many of his followers while they were travelling in different areas and during this time, they quickly came forth to light the funeral pyre, but it would not light because the Arhat, Mahākāśyapa, had not yet arrived to pay homage to the remains. After his arrival in the company of some five hundred brethren, they all paid their homage and the pyre lit itself spontaneously.

The site of the cremation is at the Rāmabhār *stūpa* (Fig. 7), which is approximately one kilometre due east of the Parinirvāṇa Temple. The huge *stūpa* has not been very thoroughly excavated and, although traces of earlier structures and platforms have been located, little is known about them.

The Division of the Relics and the Eight *Mahāstūpas*

After the cremation, the Mallas of Kuśinagara held a ceremony around the bones of the Buddha that had survived the fire and for seven days, they did *pūja* to the bones with music, dance, song and with garlands and perfumes.

Upon hearing that the Buddha had died and been cremated, Ajātaśatru of Magadha demanded a portion of the relics over which he wished to build a *stūpa*. The Licchavis of Vaiśali also sent a messenger asking for relics, as did the Śākyas of Kapilavastu, Bulis of Allakappa, the Koliyas of Rāmagāma, the Brāhmans of Veṭhadīpa and the Mallas of Pāvā. The Mallas of Kuśinagara refused to meet these demands, pointing out that the Buddha had died within their realm and insisting that all the relics should remain with them. At this point, there seems to have been a wise Brāhman, Droṇa (literally 'Measure'), who, in order to avert an impending war over the relics, proposed a fair division. In contrast to the textual tradition, sculptural representations from Sāñcī (Fig. 8) seem to suggest that there may have been an actual war. Whatever the case, the relics were divided and set up in *stūpas* by each of the contending groups. Of these original eight *mahāstūpas*, the Vaiśali and Rājagṛha (see Part IV, Figs 8 and 24, respectively), Kuśinagara and Kapilavastu ones are known. Relics from the Kapilavastu *stūpa* at modern Piprahwa (see the 'Kapilavastu Revisited' section below) were contained in several caskets (Fig. 9), one of which carried an inscription stating that they were the relics of the Buddha (see below, 'The Inscription on the Piprahwa Reliquary'). The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* also tells of the Moriyas of Pipphalavana arriving too late to claim any relics but being given embers from the cremation fire over which they built a *stūpa* and that Droṇa was given the vessel with which he divided the remains to build a *stūpa* over. Thus, there would seem to have been two additional *stūpas* with legitimate claim to very early existence.

Although the exact locations of four of the *mahāstūpas* and the two secondary *stūpas* are unkown, there is nothing to suggest that such places as Śrāvasti, Lumbinī, Sārnāth or Sāṅkāsya are in any way connected with the clans and tribal groups that received portions of the relics. Thus, the *Aṣṭamahācaitya* (Eight Great Sacred Locations, or *pīthas*, i.e. the pilgrimage sites) and the locations of the eight *mahāstūpas* only partially coincide and it is to be expected that further archaeological investigations may well discover the locations of the 'lost' four *mahāstūpas* in due time.

Aśoka's Division of the Relics

Then King Aśoka, intending to distribute far and wide the bodily relics of the Blessed One, went together with a fourfold army to the *droṇa* [not Droṇa the Brāhman, but *droṇa*, a measure of volume meaning a *stūpa* with a measure of the relics] *stūpa* that Ajātaśatru had built. He broke it open, took out all the relics, and putting back a portion of them, set up a new *stūpa*. He did the same with the second *droṇa stūpa* and so on up to the seventh one, removing the relics from each of them and then setting up new *stūpas* as tokens of his devotion. Then he proceeded to Rāmagāma. There the *nāgas* [cobra deities] took him down to the *nāga* palace and told him: 'We here pay homage to our *droṇa stūpa*.' Aśoka, therefore, let them keep their relics intact, and the *nāga* king himself escorted him back up from the palace...

Then Aśoka had eigthy-four thousand boxes made of gold, silver, cat's eye and crystal and in them were placed the relics. Also, eighty-four thousand urns and eighty-four thousand inscription plates were prepared. All of this was given to the *yakṣas* [male nature deities, guardians of treasure] for distribution in the [eighty-four thousand] *dharmarājikās* [*stūpas*] he ordered built throughout the earth as far as the surrounding ocean, in the small, great, and middle-sized towns...(J.S. Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka*, 1983, pp. 219-20.)

Seven of the eight *mahāstūpas* thus became the source of the relics that the Mauryan emperor Aśoka (*c.* 270-220 BC) redistributed throughout his empire at locations such as Sāñcī and many others, totalling 84,000 according to both the *Aśokāvadāna* and Faxian (the Chinese monk who went on pilgrimage to India from 399 to 414). Thus, not only could the faithful visit the sites of the great events of the Buddha, but it was also possible to visit the locations of his actual remains. While one must not take the number 84,000 literally, there is evidence that a major redistribution of relics did take place during the Mauryan period under the direction of Aśoka himself.

The fact that we do not know of many more potential Aśokan *stūpas* may be due to a practice of leaving local governors or deputies of the king to their own resources as to how they would build the *stūpas* in their provinces. Depending on their own faith (or lack of faith) in Buddhism, their relative resources and the degree to which Aśoka actually controlled the area (his empire was simply too vast not to have had some serious dissension and, at best, loosely allied territories), they would probably have built *stūpas* of extremely varied quality and relative permanence. Accordingly, only where direct imperial patronage occurred (for example, at Sāñcī) or where a truly devoted minister or administrator governed in Aśoka's name may we expect the possibility of *stūpas* surviving. In other cases, chance alone would dictate our expectations. Lack of local concern coupled with the early tradition that the *stūpa* would have been only a mound of earth has probably led to the loss of virtually all except for a very few of the *stūpas* from the Aśokan redistribution.

With the distribution of the relics to surrogate sites, the pilgrimage to the remains at the *mahāstūpas* became less important, and it only stands to reason that the *stūpas* containing the relics of the Buddha would then have become the centre of localized pilgrimages and that surrogate images of the Eight Great *Caityas* would also have been added to their iconography. Because devotion to the relics was specifically enjoined from the monks, the whole idea of pilgrimage, the concept of surrogates and the redistribution of the relics were non-canonical and were aspects of lay devotionalism.

While the redistribution of the relics of Śākyamuni was ostensibly an act of faith and of proselytization of the faith, it was also probably steeped in talismanic concerns for the well being of the Mauryan empire. Aśoka was, in effect, establishing the ideal Buddhist kingdom, protected by relics of the most recent Buddha (it is known from inscriptions that Aśoka also knew of and enlarged the *stūpas* of at least two of the predecessors of Śākyamuni). By doing so, he made available the relics and the living tradition of Buddhism from Afghanistan to Nepal and Bengal in the north and as far as Sri Lanka in the south. This undoubtedly encouraged the egalitarian ideals of the nascent Mahāyāna, even though the Mahāyānist sects were in disfavour with Aśoka, and helped to begin the process of establishing the promise of universal Buddhahood. Thus, although there is clear evidence that Aśoka supported the schools of Buddhism that were to become known as the Theravādin tradition to the detriment and exclusion of the schools that were to become the Mahāyāna tradition, he set the stage for the rapid expansion of lay interest in Buddhism and the ultimate growth of the Mahāyāna tradition.

Since the eight *mahāstūpas* reflect a lay concern and a 'proto-Mahāyāna' sentiment, it is very probable that the early *stūpas*, which have always been understood by Buddhologists and art historians alike as axiomatically 'Hinayāna', should be re-evaluated with their fundamental assumption that the monuments are at least 'proto-Mahāyāna' and, more probably, strictly Mahāyāna. This would be a major revision in the basic understanding of the monuments and of Buddhist art of the early period. Given the passage restricting the monks from relic worship and leaving it to the laity, it seems an inevitable conclusion that must be taken into account when discussing the early monuments.

Remarkably, one of Aśoka's monuments has survived almost intact. The Great Stūpa at Sāñcī (Stūpa I; Fig. 10), was first built during Aśoka's time and, although much damaged during the reign of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga (r. *c.* 185-151 BC), it was restored and enlarged during later Śuṅga (*c.* 185-*c.* 73 BC) times. It had four large gates (*toraṇas*) added during the early Sātavāhana period (*c.* 25 BC-AD 25), and has survived, with only minor additions, since that time. Thus, it is the closest approximation we have of what one of the Aśokan *stūpas* looked like and is generally believed to reflect the appearance of the early *stūpas* in general. This assumption is confirmed by comparison with the 'Aśokan' *stūpas* at Patan in Nepal, the *stūpa* of Kāśyapa Buddha at Swayambhūnāth also in Nepal, the remnant of the Bhārhut *stūpa* and the Amarāvatī *stūpa*, all of which, in their earliest forms, date from the Mauryan period or shortly thereafter. Unfortunately, all of the comparative *stūpas* are much less 'pure' or are destroyed and known only from internal sculptural representations. Thus, Sāñcī, with its low profile, southern orientation, simple upper fence enclosure (*harmikā*) atop the dome (*aṇḍa*), simple tower of three canopies (*chattra* or *bhūmis*) and massive stone enclosing fence (*vedikā*), preserve for the modern visitor the feeling and actual physical environment of a pre-Christian era *stūpa*. It is as close as one can get to the sense and mood of the early monuments.

The legacy of the pilgrimage route tradition is very clear both from the texts and from the actual monuments. The pilgrimage sites of the *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya* (Eight Great Illusions) at the Eight Great Sacred Locations provided a basis for a reaffirmation of faith in the Buddhist way. Either by visiting the sites or by seeing and acknowledging the surrogates of the sites at such places as Sāñcī one could experience the life and deeds of Śākyamuni directly in the sense of obtaining *darśana*. Coupled with the fact that the eight great *stūpas* provide direct physical contact with the Buddha's persona, there was a powerful impetus giving strength to the lay devotional side of the religion. Given monumental impetus by Aśoka's own pilgrimage, marking of the pilgrimage sites and redistribution of the relics, the cults of the *caityas* and of the relics undoubtedly provided much of the early devotional basis for lay Buddhism.

Kapilavastu Revisited

In Part I of this series, it was noted that there was debate over the location of ancient Kapilavastu, the capital of the Śākyas. However, based on

(Fig. 11) Revised map showing Buddhist pilgrimage sites

the discovery by the Royal Nepalese Department of Archaeology of seals mentioning the *stūpas* of Śuddhodana and of Māyādevī at Tilurakot, it appeared that the problem of Kapilavastu probably had been resolved. Yet even as the first four parts of this series of articles were being published, new evidence on the location of ancient Kapilavastu was emerging. During the 1970s, excavations were carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India at the adjacent sites of Piprahwa, Ganwaria and Salagarh mound in the Basti District of Uttar Pradesh (Fig. 11). In his 1986 book, *Discovery of Kapilavastu*, the excavator, K.M. Srivastava, reports finding sealings at Piprahwa bearing inscriptions in the first- or second-century AD Brāhmī script reading *Om Devaputravihare Kapilavastusa Bhikshu Sanghasa*, '[belonging to the] Mendicant community [of the] Devaputravihara [at] Kapilavastu', and another type reading *Mahākapilavastu Bhikshu Sanghasa*, '[belonging to the] Mendicant community of Great Kapilavastu'. There were twenty-two of the first type and thirteen of the second type (of which only eight are legible). Since so many of the seals were found at the site, it is unlikely that they represent chance finds of stray objects that had been made at another site and were brought to Piprahwa. Accordingly, one has to agree that Piprahwa is probably Kapilavastu, at least so far as believed in the first or second century AD, and that the Piprahwa relics may well be the Śākyan relics.

How this debate about which site was Kapilavastu came about and the implications that it has for the study of the sites is very significant in terms of the 'epistemology' (essentially how we know what [we think] we know) of the sites. The identification of both Tilurakot and Piprahwa as Kapilavastu was, until the discovery of the sealings, based primarily on the evidence of the Chinese pilgrims Faxian and Xuanzang. The only other evidence of any value is an inscription on a casket (Fig. 9) contained in the Piprahwa *stūpa*. While, to some authors, the casket inscription supports the identification of Piprahwa as Kapilavastu, the reading of the inscription has been highly problematic and there has been legitimate question as to whether the relics contained in it are those of Śākyamuni or, far less probably, those of one of his relatives among the Śākyas. Accordingly, in terms of the historiography of the problem, the inscription may be discounted (for my reading of the inscription see below).

Faxian gives the location of Kapilavastu in this way:

'Leaving the city of Śrāvasti, and going twelve *yojanas* [a stage of a journey or a day's travel, usually said to be about 12.5-14.5 kilometres] to the southeast, we arrive at a town called Na-pi-ka (unidentified)...the birthplace of Krakuchanda Buddha [one of Śākyamuni's predecessors]...Going north from this place less than a *yojana* we arrive at a town where Kanakamuni Buddha [another of Śākyamuni's predecessors] was born... From this spot going eastward less than a *yojana* we arrive at the city of Ka-wei-lo-wei (Kapilavastu)...[There follows a description of the city and environs including the Arrow Well which he places thirty *li* to the southeast. Fifty *li* to the east of the city is the royal garden, called Lumbinī. (Beal, *Travels of Fah-hian and Sung-yun...*, pp. 84-89.)

The location of Kapilavastu may be summarized from Xuanzang's account in this way:

[From Śrāvasti] going southeast about 500 *li* [thought to have been somewhat less than 300 metres during Xuanzang's time] we come to Kapilavastu. The country is about 4,000 *li* in circuit and in it there are about ten desolate and ruined cities. The capital [Kapilavastu] is overthrown and in ruins. Its circuit cannot be accurately measured but the royal precinct within the city measures fourteen or fifteen *li* in circumference...[There follows a long account of the city and its environs.] Outside of the south gate of the city is the place where the prince [Siddhārtha] competed in athletic sports. Thirty *li* south from the south gate is a place called Arrow Well where the prince's arrow fell to earth and created a fountain. To the northeast of the Arrow Well some eighty or ninety *li* is Lumbinī. (Based on Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, vol. II, pp. 13-25)

(Fig. 12) Māyā's dream of the white elephant
Bhārhut, *c.* 100-80 BC
Indian Museum, Calcutta

First, it must be recognized that the directions in these travellers' accounts are not compass directions by any means but a very general reference to the direction travelled. However, even today the back roads of India follow in a general way the old village roads of past centuries (northeastern Uttar Pradesh and northern Bihar flood virtually every rainy season to the present day and river flooding has usually changed the exact routes). Therefore, it must be assumed that both Faxian and Xuanzang travelled from Śrāvasti more or less following the course of the modern Rāpti River east from Śrāvasti towards modern Bānsi or Naugarh. That being the case, there is a remarkable correspondence between the distance from Śrāvasti to near the Kapilavastu site. Taking a mean value of 13.5 kilometres for a *yojana*, the distance converts to around 520 *li* for Faxian's journey, for all practical purposes, the same as the generalized 500 *li* of Xuanzang.

This would have led them to approximately the same general area, but the descriptions are not accurate enough to be of much value in determining the exact location of Kapilavastu. However, if we work backwards from the fixed point of Lumbinī, we discover that the pilgrims would seem to have been describing two different sites. Faxian's site for Lumbinī is significantly closer to Lumbinī than that of Xuanzang. Simply enough, this discrepancy led scholars in an acrimonious debate over the actual location of Kapilavastu.

The situation is further complicated by the problem that shortly after the death of Śākyamuni, as reported by Xuanzang, Kapilavastu was apparently razed to the ground, with most of the members of the Śākya clan massacred in a war with King Virūḍhaka of Kosala. While the historical validity of this tradition is, at best, vague, if it is true, it could account for the loss of even local knowledge as to the exact location of the Kapilavastu site at a very early date. As far as is known, there was little, if any, emphasis on the pilgrimage route until the great pilgrimage of Aśoka and, given the presumed destruction of the city, it is possible that the site lay unattended and even forgotten from about 450 BC to about 250 BC.

Archaeologically, it is important to realize that although virtually all of the sites of the pilgrimage route have pre-Aśokan remains at them, except for the *stūpas* of the Buddha's relics at Vaiśali, not one of them has definitely identifiable traces of Śākyamuni Buddha or his followers at the sites that date prior to the Mauryan period. Even the relics at Piprahwa are in identical style caskets, one of which has an inscription on it in Mauryan letters; in other words, even they were apparently reburied in new caskets in the middle of the third century BC.

Ultimately, one has to insist that, except for Rājagṛha, none of the sites associated with Śākyamuni are established by direct contemporaneous archaeological evidence but are mostly known by what this author shall term 'Mauryan validation'. Because of the earliness of the tradition of the four major *pīthas*, those of the Birth, the Enlightenment, the First Sermon and the *Parinirvāṇa* as described in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (see part I), one simply assumes that these sites were continuously known from the time of the Buddha and that our probability of knowing where these events occurred is very high. The secondary sites, those of the Great Illusion, the Descent, the Taming of Nālāgiri and the Gift of the Monkey, would all seem to be of a 'later' tradition, although there is archaeological evidence that these sites were considered to be very important by no later than the end of the second century BC. Therefore, one must assume that these places were identified by that time. Included

among the early representations at Bhārhut is the visit of the white elephant to Māyādevī (Fig. 12), a kind of annunciation of the birth of the future Buddha in which the Buddha-to-be descends from Trāyastriṁśa heaven and enters the womb of his mother while she dreams of a white elephant. As this event is invariably associated with the Śākya palace at Kapilavastu, it may be assumed that there was also a second-century BC tradition of the location of that site as well. What happened in the interim, between the lifetime of Śākyamuni and the beginning of the archaeological record, is unknown.

Thus, the reasonably thorough excavations under K.M. Srivastava have done two things towards establishing the Piprahwa/Ganwaria site as Kapilavastu. First, they have established that the site was known as Kapilavastu some five to six hundred years after the death of Śākyamuni and, secondly, they have established that the site had continuous occupation from the eighth century BC to about AD 500, demonstrating at least the capability of it having been the Kapilavastu site.

Regrettably, the Tilurakot site has not been excavated to the full extent possible; only glimpses of Maurya period bricks are visible at the site, yet they occur on a mound at an elevation of about three metres above the surrounding fields. This would indicate that there was the possibility of many levels below the Mauryan bricks but, of course, no details are known. As in the case of the Jetavanārāma near Śrāvasti, the Tilurakot site needs further excavation. There appears to be a tendency for the excavators to clear the site down to where they get a set of attractive (usually Gupta period) foundations. However, following the example of many Mayan sites in Guatemala and the Yucatán, where archaeologists have literally had to sacrifice a major temple to discover what lay beneath, so it will have to be with early Buddhist archaeology. Sophisticated modern archaeological techniques can find traces of wooden buildings that would have been missed only a few decades earlier. While the sealings at Piprahwa are excellent evidence of what was *de facto* historical opinion in about the second century AD, only excavation to virgin soil at both sites will finally resolve the issue.

At first reading, the weight of the evidence would seem to support the long discredited conclusion, reached years ago by Vincent A. Smith, that, so far as the two Chinese pilgrims were concerned, there were two Kapilavastus and that Faxian had indeed visited Piprahwa and Xuanzang had visited Tilurakot. One may note that it would not have been the first time that a pilgrim to a holy land was told something that he wanted to hear rather than what the truth of the situation might be. But it seems that another solution is more probable. Tilurakot and Piprahwa are very close to each other. Indeed, as distances are calculated in India, they are virtually neighbours. Piprahwa is about half way between Tilurakot and Lumbinī, approximately fifteen kilometres from each. Tilurakot was obviously a town in the Śākya territories during the fifth century BC. Therefore, this author suggests that, while Piprahwa is indeed Kapilavastu, simply, for reasons as yet unknown, the *stūpas* of Śudoddhana and Māyādevī are in Tilurakot, perhaps at the site of a Śākya family shrine.

The Inscription on the Piprahwa Reliquary

Much has been written about the inscription on the relic casket from Piprahwa, excavated in 1898 by W.C Peppé. In this author's opinion, it reads: '*iyam salilanidhane budhasa bhagavate/Sakiyanam sukitibhatinam/sabhaginikanam saputadalanam*', 'This libation offering [i.e the casket] [containing relic of] the Śākya [clan's] Lord Buddha. [Given by] the Sukiti brothers, sisters, sons and wives.' The inscription is in Maurya period characters, which are virtually identical in type to those of the famous Mauryan epigraphs on the pillars and rock edicts, and there can be no doubt that the inscription dates from that era. The inscription does not say that these relics belonged to the Śākya clan nor does it state that the Sukiti family (or Sukiti himself if the name is read to mean an individual) belongs to the Śākyas as some others have argued. Thus, in spite of early opinions to the contrary, it does not identify the site of Piprahwa as relating to the Śākyas; however, it does identify the relics as being those of Śākyamuni Buddha.

Suggested Further Reading

Archaeology and History of the Pilgrimage Sites

n.b. For a more complete bibliography on Indian art in general and on many aspects of the sites, see Susan L. Huntington with John C. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India*, Weatherhill, Tokyo, 1985, pp. 659-713.

Benimadhab Barua, *Gayā and Buddha-gayā*, 2 vols, Calcutta, 1931 and 1934. For an understanding of the entire Gayā complex of holy sites and how the Bodhgayā temple relates to its context; available only in libraries.

Dipak K. Barua, *Buddha Gaya Temple: Its History*, Buddha Gaya (Bihar), 1981. A very valuable book but apparently only available at the temple.

Alexander Cunningham, *Mahâbodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-gaya*, London, 1982. Reprinted Varanasi, no date. Highly recommended. Early archaeology at both its best and worst but mandatory for a full understanding of the Mahābodhi Temple at Bodhgayā. Generally available in larger 'old' Delhi book shops, *e.g.* Motilal Barnasidas or Munshiram Manoharalal.

A. Führer, *Monograph on Buddha Sakyamuni's Birth-place in the Nepalese Tarai*, Monographs of the Archaeological Survey of Northern India, vol. VI, Allahabad, 1897. Problematic in several aspects but still a useful account of the area with a fascinating description of the Aśokan pillar at the *stūpa* of Konakamuni Buddha. Apparently not reprinted; available only in libraries.

Indian Archaeology: A Review, 1970-71, p.37; 1971-72, p. 45; 1972-72, p. 33 (seal insciptions); 1973-74, pp. 27-28; 1974-75, pp. 39-41; 1975-76, pp. 47-50; 1976-77, pp. 50-52. Reports on the excavations at Piprahwa, Ganwaria and Salagarh; available only at the office of the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.

Mohammad Hamid Kuraishi (with revisions by A. Ghosh), *Rajgir*, New Delhi, 1958 and 1975. Highly recommended. An Archaeological Survey of India guide book; available only at the Survey's office, New Delhi.

Chakradhar Mahapatra, *The Real Birth Place of Buddha*, Cuttack (Orissa), 1977. An alternate view of the whole narrative of the life of the Buddha and the location of Kapilavastu in particular. While it is of little scholarly value, if the reader has a fairly thorough knowledge of the archaeology of the pilgrimage route, it is fun to read and useful for many citations to the literature.

Tara Nanda Misra, 'Tilaurakot Excavations (2023-2029 V.S.)', *Ancient Nepal*, no. 41-42 (Aug.-Nov. 1977), pp. 11-28 (English Section).

Rajendralala Mitra, *Buddha Gaya, The Great Buddhist Temple, The Hermitage of Sakya Muni*, Calcutta, 1878. Reprinted, Delhi, 1972. Particularly important for understanding the state of the temple prior to the British Archaeological Survey of India restoration by Cunningham.

P.C. Mukherji, *A Report on a Tour of the Antiquities of Kapilavastu Terai of Nepal during February and March, 1899*, Monographs of the Archaeological Survey of India, Imperial Series, no. XXVI, pt. 1, Calcutta, 1901. Reprinted, Varanasi, 1969. A very useful

description of the entire area with many additional sites to be visited by the more intrepid visitor.

D.R. Patil, *Kuśinagara*, New Delhi, 1981. Highly recommended. An Archaeological Survey of India guide book, available only at the office of the Survey, New Delhi.

Babu Krishna Rijal, 'Excavations and other archaeological activities in Tilaurakot (Ancient Kapilavastu): 1973-1974', *Ancient Nepal*, no. 26 (Jan. 1974), pp. 41-45.

———, 'Archaeological Activities in Lumbini (1976-1977)', *Ancient Nepal*, nos. 30-39 (Jan. 1975-April 1977) pp. 28-33 (English Section).

Jeremy Russell, *The Eight Places of Buddhist Pilgrimage*, New Delhi, 1981. Contains much good information but, writing from the Tibetan viewpoint(?), substitutes Nālandā for Vaiśali.

Amulyachandra Sen, *Rajagriha and Nālandā*, Calcutta, 1964. A very valuable guide to Rajgir; unfortunately only available in the used book market.

K.M. Srivastava, *Discovery of Kapilavastu*, New Delhi, 1986. Outrageously priced (Rs. 900 or about US$85), but very cheaply produced with dreadful plates, this book is a routine publication of archaeological finds presenting the most up-to-date material on the Kapilavastu controversy. Except for the intense polemics of the author's arguments about the identification of the site, it is mostly a technical archaeological report of interest to specialists.

———, *Buddha's Relics from Kapilavastu*, Delhi, 1986. Some information on the excavations and a personal narrative of the author's visit to Sri Lanka accompanying the relics from Kapilavastu to an exhibition there.

M. Venkataramayya, *Śrāvasti*, New Delhi, 1981. Highly recommended. An Archaeological Survey of India guide book, available only at the Survey's office, New Delhi.

Text Sources for the Events in the Life of the Buddha

As there is no definitive life of the Buddha Śākyamuni yet written, even the most casual reader is faced with the rather monumental task of finding the various episodes scattered through several major works in the Buddhist canon. The following partial list of citations is only intended to supplement the references in the series of articles and to provide a basis to start one's own reading.

Residence in Tuṣita

Mahāvastu, J.J. Jones, trans., 3 vols, Luzac & Co., London, 1949, 1952 and 1956; vol. 2, pp. 1-5.

Birth and Early Life

Māyā's Dream
Buddhacarita, E.B. Cowell, trans., in *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts*, Oxford, 1984, p. 4.
Lalitavistara, E. Foucaux, trans., pub. as *Le Lalita Vistara*, Paris, 1884, pp. 50-54.
Mahāvastu, vol 2, pp. 4-10 (elephant story, p. 8).
Nidāna-Katha, T.W. Rhys Davids, trans., pub. as *Buddhist Birth Stories*, London, 1925, pp. 149-50.

Birth at Lumbinī
Buddhacarita, p. 5.
Divyāvadāna, E.B. Cowell and R.A. Neil, eds., Cambridge, 1886, p. 389.
Lalitavistara, pp. 76-77.
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 16-26.
Nidāna-Katha, p. 54.

Seven Strides
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 18-21.

Bathing of the Infant Buddha-to-be
Buddhacarita, pp. 5, 7.
Lalitavistara, pp. 78, 85.
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 21-23.

Entering the Shrine of the Goddess Abhayā
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 22-23.

The Visit to Asita
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 27-42 (prediction, p. 40; lists *laksana*, pp. 41-42).

Youth
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 42-45.

Wooing of Yaśodharā
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 70-74 (tournament: throws dead elephant killed by Devadatta, fighting and boxing, archery with seven palm trees and drum target).

Great Departure
Buddhacarita, pp. 59-61.
Divyāvadāna, p. 391.
Lalitavistara, pp. 185-196.
Māgandiya-sutta, I.B. Horner, trans., in *The Collection of The Middle Length Sayings* (*Majjihima-nikāya*), vol. 2, London, 1957, pp. 181-92. The three palaces noted in this Pāli text might be seen as confirming the three palaces, each with a different wife, of the Tibetan tradition (see Rockhill, listed below).
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 111-34 (version I), pp. 160-61 (version II).
Nidāna-Katha, pp. 173-77.

Cutting Hair
Buddhacarita, p. 68.
Divyāvadāna, p. 391.
Lalitavistara, p. 197.
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 161.
Nidāna-Katha, p. 177.

Changing Robes
Buddhacarita, p. 68.
Divyāvadāna, p. 391.
Lalitavistara, p. 197.
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, p. 186.
Nidāna-Katha, p. 178.

Six Year's Fast and the Visit to Sujātā's Place
Buddhacarita, pp. 132-35.
Divyāvadāna, p. 292.
Lalitavistara, pp. 217-231.
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 120-26, 191-97 (prediction), 281.
Nidāna-Katha, pp. 180-87.

Enlightenment

(*Kuśa* Grass from Svastika Yāvasika and The Praise of Kālika Nāgarāja)
Buddhacarita, pp. 145-56.
Divyāvadāna, pp. 292-93.
Lalitavistara, pp. 231-32, 241-44.
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 248-49, 281, 283-90 (lengthy praise of Kāla), 354-60.
Nidāna-Katha, p. 188.

Māravijaya
Ariyapariyesanasutta, I.B. Horner, trans., in *The Collection of The Middle Length Sayings* (*Majjihima-nikāya*), vol. 1, London, 1954, pp. 203-19.
Buddhacarita, pp. 137-47.
Divyāvadāna, p. 393.
Lalitavistara, pp. 257-86.
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 250-53, 260-69, 290-317, 360-72; 364-67 (Mārā's army described in detail).
Nidāna-Katha, pp. 190-97.

Post Enlightenment Meditations

Mahāvastu, vol. 2, 269-74, 317-354; vol. 3, pp. 261-74, 287-90 (bodhi tree, pp. 261-68; standing gazing at tree, pp. 268-69; walking up and down, pp. 269-74, 287, includes second temptation by Mārā's daughters Tantrī, Aratī and Ratī, p. 274; abode of Kāla, a *nāga*, p. 287; Mucilinda, pp. 287-88; banyan tree of the goatherd, pp. 288-90, 302-15, goatherd reborn in Trāyastriṁśa as deva Nygrodha [*n.b.* the visit of Indra and Brahma takes place here]; shrine of many devas in grove of *kṣīrikā* trees, p. 290).

Decision to teach and the trip from Uruvilvā to Vārāṇasī
Mahāvastu, vol. 2, pp. 299-322.

First Sermon

Ariyapariyesanasutta (in *Majjihima-nikāya*), vol. 1, pp. 203-19.
Buddhacarita, pp. 171-89.
Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 11, Oxford, 1881, pp. 146-55.
Divyāvadāna, p. 393.
Lalitavistara, pp. 341-68.
Mahāvastu, vol. 3, pp. 322-44.
Nidāna-Katha, pp. 207-8.

The Śrāvasti Cycle

Dhammapadathakathā, E.W. Burlingame, trans., pub. as *Buddhist Legends*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1921, vol. 3, pp. 41-47.
Divyāvadāna, pp. 161-62, 394.
Nidāna-Katha, p. 200.

The Sāṅkāsya Descent

Dhammapadathakathā, vol. 3, pp. 52-56.
Divyāvadāna, pp. 394, 401.

The Gift of the Monkey

Dhammapadathakathā, vol. 1, p. 180.

The Taming of Nālāgiri

Vinaya-Pitaka, I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline*, vol. 5, (*Cullavaga*), London, 1951, pp. 272-74.

The Parinirvāṇa

Divyāvadanā, p. 394.
The Mahā-parinibbānna Suttanna, T.W. Rhys David, trans., in *Buddhist Suttas, Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 11, Oxford, 1881, pp. 1-136 *passim*.

Secondary Compilations of Interest

W. Woodville Rockhill, trans. *The Life of the Buddha and the Early History of His Order; Derived from Tibetan Works...*, London, 1907. The life of the Buddha in this work is derived from the Tibetan Vinaya and is a legitimate early version now lost in other cultures.

Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, 3rd ed., London, 1949.

n.b. There are many other 'lives of the Buddha' but, to this author's knowledge, almost all are heavily abridged (sometimes so severely as to limit even their general usefulness), are frequently strongly romanticized and are often from a single sectarian point of view. Furthermore, very few have the far-reaching technical validity of the two given above.

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